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A
S E R M O N

Preached in the PARISH-CHURCH of
CHRIST-CHURCH, LONDON:
On THURSDAY, APRIL the 27th, 1780.

BEING THE TIME
Of the YEARLY MEETING of the
CHILDREN Educated in the CHARITY-
SCHOOLS, in and about the Cities of LONDON
and WESTMINSTER.

By the RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD,
JOHN, LORD BISHOP OF OXFORD.

Published at the Request of the SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE,
And the TRUSTEES of the several SCHOOLS.

To which is annexed,
AN ACCOUNT OF THE
SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

L O N D O N :

Printed by JOHN RIVINGTON, JUN. PRINTER TO THE
SAID SOCIETY, in ST. JOHN'S-SQUARE;

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ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.

MDCCCLXXX.

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PHILIPPIANS I. 27.

ONLY LET YOUR CONVERSATION BE AS IT BE-
COMETH THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST; THAT
WHETHER I COME AND SEE YOU, OR ELSE BE
ABSENT, I MAY HEAR OF YOUR AFFAIRS, THAT
YE STAND FAST IN ONE SPIRIT, WITH ONE
MIND STRIVING TOGETHER FOR THE FAITH OF
THE GOSPEL.

THE sacred Writings differ from mere hu-
man Compositions, among other Excellen-
cies, in this, that there is hardly a single
Period in them, without Matter for Speculation and
Instruction. The Epistles of *St. Paul* are remark-
ably distinguished by this Abundance and Compre-
hension of Thought. The epistolary Style is usually
light, and the Matter temporary, or personal, or
local. Whereas the whole Contents of his Epistles
are universally important. They were chiefly
b written

written for the Benefit of particular Churches, but the principal Points stated in them, which influence every Part, are of perpetual and extensive Use. Hence almost every Period becomes interesting, and may, without Violence, be diffused into copious Instruction.

The Verse before us is an Instance of this. He was solicitous to hear of the Affairs of his favorite Church, the *Philippian* Christians. But the Period, which conveys to them this affectionate Regard, branches out into general Christian Admonitions. *Only let your Conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ; that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your Affairs, that ye stand fast in one Spirit, with one Mind striving together for the FAITH of the GOSPEL.*

He had mentioned in a former Verse, his Hope of their *Furtherance and Joy in the Faith*; which Improvement he takes Occasion here to explain, by placing it in three Things, each of which conveys a distinct, substantial and general Lesson; in a *Conversation* such as *becometh the Gospel of CHRIST*, in a steady UNION among themselves, and in an active ZEAL, for the FAITH of the GOSPEL.

Thus

Thus an affectionate Intimation of his to the *Philippians*, expressed in few Words, is, at this Distance of Time and Place, still proper and pertinent in an Address to a Society of Christians, *Striving together for the Faith of the Gospel.*

The Motives, upon which your Society was first formed, the Unity, with which it has hitherto been conducted, and your unwearied Zeal for the Christian Cause, have been as pure and eminent, as if the Apostle himself had made them the Subject of an intire Epistle; yet in reading your annual Accounts, we may trace up the whole of your Plan to the Apostolical Directions contained in this single Verse; and, I must add, it is a most comfortable Observation, that in these our Days, when neither the Knowledge of Christianity is so explicitly professed, nor the Practice of it so generally conspicuous, as heretofore, there exists a Society of Christians, whose Conduct is precisely such, as St. PAUL recommended to his most beloved Church.

In order to shew, that this is not affirmed without Grounds, let us consider, that the Apostle's Method of converting a dissolute World was, by promoting Christian Knowledge; by teaching and in-

culcating that Doctrine, which is peculiarly Christian, and the solid Support of Christian Virtues and Hopes.

The Love of God manifested to the World by the
Rom. iii. REDEMPTION, *that is in* CHRIST JESUS, was upper-
24. most in his Thoughts, from the Time, when it was
first revealed to him. It continued so throughout
his Ministry. He professes to the *Corinthians*, that
when he came to them, he was determined to *know*
nothing else. All practical Christianity appeared to
him so much involved in this Truth, that he took
every Occasion of advising his Converts to conform
their Conversation to it, and to keep up, by Emu-
lation, their Zeal for it.

He proclaimed it boldly, furrounded as he was
with Perils; and at his own Expence, poor as he
was; he exposed himself to Indignities and Perse-
cutions from Jews and Heathens; ventured even to
preach CHRIST JESUS at ATHENS, and to make
Converts to him at ROME.

He might have rendered himself acceptable
wherever he went, by delivering only the *moral* Pre-
cepts of the Gospel. *They* could not have inter-
fered

fered much with Jewish or Gentile Prejudices, and, in his Hands, could not have failed to make some Impression. But then he would not have executed the whole of his Commission, nor have duly enforced Christian Morals, by setting forth the Divine Truths, in which they were founded, and which had brought to Light an Encouragement equal to the severest Virtue; — Truths, of which he was not ashamed, however obnoxious. He had experienced, how ill the Gospel of Christ was relished by Jews and Greeks; but his Faith and Zeal were superior to the Opposition of mere Authority, of popular Prejudice, or of splendid Learning.

Hence the unwearied Perseverance, with which he maintained the Doctrine of Salvation by CHRIST, distinguished his Writings no less, than his other Apostolical Acts. That Doctrine was so interwoven with every Subject in his Epistles, that many Parts of them are not intelligible without it; and it was so evidently the Point, upon which he lays the greatest Stress, on all Occasions, and before Men of all Descriptions, that a System of Christian Instruction, unsupported by that fundamental Doctrine, would be an apparent Contempt of his Authority.

It

It may be alleged by those, who are unwilling to proceed so far, “ that he had Jewish Prejudices to combat; that the Jews had a Persuasion, well authenticated, of the Efficacy of the Sacrifices of Atonement prescribed by their Law; and that, in Opposition chiefly to them, he so frequently asserted, that there was no further Reliance for Justification upon those Works of the Law; they being accomplished as Types, and superseded as Acts of Propitiation; — that he might find it necessary to remind them, that, in their most vigorous State, those religious Rites could not do so much, as was done by the Death of CHRIST; — that accordingly he tells a Jewish Synagogue at *Antioch*, very early in his Ministry, *By him, all that believe are justified from all Things, from which ye could not be justified by the Law of Moses*: — But, that it is too much to conclude from this occasional Necessity the Apostle was under, of insisting upon the Doctrine of Salvation by CHRIST, in his Writings and Discourses; as the Christian Doctrine, that therefore he thought a Recommendation of Christian Virtue imperfect and ineffectual without it.”

Acts x.ii.
39.

There

There would be some Weight in this, if the Apostle had conducted himself differently towards Gentiles; not Gentile Profelytes to Judaism, but Heathen Converts to Christianity.

The Epistle to the *Ephesians* appears to have been partly written to such, as had never embraced Judaism; yet the excellent moral Lessons it contains are founded in this, that they were *created in Christ Jesus unto good Works; that though they were some Time far off, they were made nigh by the Blood of Christ, when he broke down the middle Wall of Partition between them and the Jews.*

We have an Instance more immediately to our Purpose, in what passed in the Prison at *Philippi*. *Paul* and *Silas* were prosecuted as Jews, before Heathen Magistrates, and committed by them to the Custody of a Keeper, who could not be supposed a Jew. This Man, seeing the supernatural Succour the Apostles had received, came trembling and said, *Sirs, what must I do to be saved?* The answer was not, “Act up to the Dignity of thy Nature, do every good Office of Justice and Humanity to all Mankind.” The Advice would have been unexceptionable from a mere Moralist, but not
satisfactory

satisfactory from an Apostle to one, who asked, what he must do to be saved? The Terms of Salvation were delivered to him in few Words, but
 Acts xvi. 31. such as comprehended every human Duty; *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy House.*

This was the Apostle's Mode of planting and propagating Christianity, among Jews and Greeks. Nor are we Strangers to the Reasons, why he made this his Ground-Work; why his Mind, whatever Subject he was considering, was principally possessed with the *faithful Saying, worthy of*
 1 Tim. i. 15. *all Acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the World to save Sinners.*

Salvation is naturally the Object of Man's Pursuit, if he really believes a future State. His Life here is only a Passage to something better, or something worse. It is doubtless desirable to the best Man to have that Passage commodious; and therefore his Duty to make it so, as far as he can, to his Fellow-Creatures. But with all the Good we can do, with all the Improvements we can make in Human Life, or in the Condition of Mankind, by universal Benevolence, still the World is to us no
 abiding

abiding Place; and as there remains the Duty and Necessity of looking forward to a better and more lasting State, that State, and the Grounds upon which we may hope to enter into it, are the most interesting Objects of our Attention. The Virtues of Humanity, and all the other Duties of human Life, must in common Sense, as well as Gratitude to God, be directed thither by the Man, whose Hope is not limited by this Life.

The Apostle, deriving his Authority from HIM, ^{John vi. 68.} *who had the Words of eternal Life*, and it being an Authority, to proclaim the most desirable of all Truth, he could not, with Christian Hope in his Mind, descend to the mere Fitness and Utility of a *sober, righteous, and godly Life*, with Respect to ^{Tit. ii. 12.} temporal Happiness, private or public. Precepts of Duty have always been light, in Comparison, and feeble, without a firmer Support; because the Rewards of it in the present State, great as they are, are not so generally attractive, as the Temptations to Sin.

He was authorised to propose Salvation, as merited for us by Christ; and such an Offer could not be rejected by those, who considered well the Im-

port of it; for it was capable of agitating a considerate Mind with all the Emotions of Joy and Gratitude, that ever were felt. The Terms became an easy Yoke and a light Burthen, when the Offer was duly estimated. Newness of Life, comprehensive as it is of every human Duty, must follow immediately, in Proportion to Man's Powers; and when once it became habitual, Temptation was disarmed, without farther Reasoning.

Hence the most amiable Duties of Morality, that of Benevolence for Instance, however suited to the Condition, and productive of the Happiness of Man, are not suffered by the Writers of the New Testament to rest upon their intrinsic Excellency. St. Paul frequently expresses a Wish, that the Christians, to whom he writes, might be *kindly affectioned one to another*; that every Christian might increase the Quantity of Good, and lessen the Quantity of Evil in the World. But he knew, that an Appeal to Men's own Understandings and Hearts would not so successfully impress these Duties, as the firm Persuasion, that there is a Way open to Heaven; and that they, who rest their Hopes of Salvation on the Merits of Christ, and fulfill his Terms of Acceptance

Acceptance with God, which comprehend all Duty, shall infallibly be saved.

If the Knowledge of Duty would impel to the Practice of it, the Law of Nature would have been sufficient for Man, and we should have enjoyed a different World from the present. But even the Law of *Moses*, with very strong temporal Sanctions, did not produce a Nation *zealous of good Works*. St. ^{Tit. ii.} *Paul* and the other Apostles, wishing to see Professors of Christianity distinguished by mutual Benevolence and whatever else is *of good Report*, laid ^{Phil. iv.} ^{8.} their Stresses upon a new and more cogent Motive, than had been proposed either before or under the Law. With this they began and ended their Instruction. Reasoning about the Fitness of Virtue had failed to produce it; Length of Days in a fruitful Country had not invited many, either to Piety or common Justice. The infinite Goodness of God having offered the most powerful of all Motives, Life and Happiness eternal, Men might indeed shut their Eyes and Ears to the Truth, but they could not, without being deeply affected and thoroughly reformed, consider and believe, that *God so loved us, that he sent his Son to be a Propitiation for* ^{I John iv.} ^{10.} *our Sins*.

Heb. ii. 17. Christ was the great *High Priest*, who had made
 Heb. ii. 10. *Reconciliation for the Sins of the World*; who being
 Heb. ii. 10. *made perfect through Sufferings, was become the Guide*
 Heb. ii. 10. *to eternal Salvation to all them that obey him.* It was
 St. Paul's Commission to declare this, and as he
 could not add to it, so neither could he diminish,
 or pass it over in Silence on any Occasion, in which
 Christian Doctrine or Practice occurred to his
 Thoughts.

But even if he had been disposed to gain Heathen
 Philosophers, by urging *their* Motives to moral Duty,
 he could not have withheld from his Converts the
 Comforts resulting from the Gospel. It was a
 Tiding of great Joy to all Nations, and was com-
 mitted to his Hands, to be dispensed to as many as
 were fit to receive it. The Dispensation of Com-
 fort was as much the Business of a Minister of the
 Gospel, as the Propagation of Truth, or the Pro-
 motion of Virtue. He discharged it all, by laying
 the Foundation of the Christian Church, like a
 1 Cor. iii. 10. *wise Master Builder*, in the Doctrine, from which
 every Part might receive Strength and Stability.

So far we have the Authority and Example of a
 great Apostle, for keeping up the Weight and Dig-
 nity

nity of that fundamental Doctrine of our holy Religion, SALVATION BY JESUS CHRIST; for communicating it to the Ignorant, and placing it, as assiduously as possible, before the Thoughtless; and this I apprehend to have been the Conduct of our Society.

The original Design was, to instruct the Ignorant in Christian FAITH and PRACTICE. The Society hath now carried on this Work and Labour of Love, for many Years, with Disinterestedness, with Perseverance, and, there is much Reason to hope, with Success. Their annual Account professes, that they have been engaged in carrying on such Designs, as might promote the Interests of true Religion, and the Honour of Almighty God; which Designs they have explained to the World very early, by styling themselves the SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

In order thereto, they began with advising and encouraging the Erection of Charity Schools in all Parts of the Kingdom, particularly where they were most wanted, in the Capital, for the Benefit of such Children, as were destitute of other Means of religious Knowledge, being, either wilfully or
unavoidably

unavoidably neglected by their Parents, in the first Concern of human Life.

It appears, that under the Countenance of this Society, and with their occasional Assistance, upwards of fifty-three thousand Children have been educated, in the Course of the present Century, in Christian Principles, for which they had little or no Chance without such Aid; and have been thus trained up to the several Duties of human Life, to which they might have been Strangers, as indispensable Duties.

But as the Parents of these Children, as well as many other Persons in their State of Life, stood likewise remarkably in Need of religious Instruction, or of Encouragement in the Practice of their Duty, the next Care of the Society has been, to furnish them with Bibles, Prayer-Books, and a Variety of small religious Tracts, suited both to their Capacity and Leisure, and some of them written by Prelates of the first Character in the Protestant Church.

The Poor have indeed the same Advantage of public religious Instruction with the Rich; but as
many

many of them are insensible of the Importance of it, and therefore either do not frequent Places of public Worship, or do not attend them with the proper Disposition of Mind; it was an excellent Invention of Christian Charity, to divert them from the Vices, to which unprincipled Men are always exposed, by Way-laying their Minds with the holy Scriptures, the Book of Common-Prayer, and the other Helps before-mentioned to a religious and virtuous Life.

These are the general Designs of the Society, which I may venture to call APOSTOLICAL, as they amount to the Work of leading the Ignorant, awakening the Thoughtless, and converting the Irreligious, to the Knowledge of Christ. The rest of their Labours branch out from this general Plan.

We see by their Accounts, that their Christian Spirit hath not only exerted itself in Favor of uninstructed Fellow-Creatures in WALES, in the Isle of MAN, in the Off Islands of SCILLY; but it appears to have acquired Vigour in its Course, and to have extended their charitable Views to the persecuted Protestants of SALTZBURGH, to the *Greek* Churches in PALESTINE, SYRIA, MESOPOTAMIA, ARABIA,
and.

and EGYPT, and even to the Support of the *Danish* Protestant Missions in the EAST-INDIES. All this has been done, and continues to be done, for the noble Purpose of spreading far and wide the Knowledge of Christianity, as the most solid Foundation for the Practice of the whole Duty of Man.

If any Member of this laudable Society should, in some Hour of Self-recollection, look back at the immense Quantity of Good, to which he has been a Contributor, he will feel a Pleasure greater and better suited to a good Mind, than that which very worthy Men may innocently feel, at the Review of their Reputation and Prosperity in the World.

If any Well-wisher to his Country, who has no Ground for an honorable Self-applause of that Kind, should chance to peruse the Accounts of this Society, from mere Motives of Curiosity, he could not fail to venerate an Institution of such extensive public and private Benefit.

Pf. xli. 1. *Blessed is the Man, who considereth the Poor and Needy, in their temporal Wants. As we have Reason to presume, that there are Degrees of Happiness in a future State, how much more blessed He, who*
considers

confiders Generations to come, in providing a Supply for their most pressing Wants, Instruction, Comfort, Means of real Happiness temporal and eternal!

The Christian Religion will provide all this, wherever it is embraced and understood. It will devote Man to God, render him useful to the World, and though it must often fail of gratifying some of his Wishes, they not being all directed to real Happiness, it will advance him to more, than Philosophy ever offered, an intire Resignation to the Divine Will in this World, and the Improvement of that Peace of the Soul into actual and eternal Joy in the next.

It is one of the greatest and most wonderful Blessings of Heaven, that Man, with all his Imperfections and Sins, should thus have it in his Power to communicate the most valuable and durable Gift of God to many thousands; that he should even in some Cases make an Object of this Branch of Charity perhaps a better Christian in general, than himself; and almost insensibly lay up in Store for himself some Extenuation of the Blemishes in his own Character.

I mean not to maintain the Popish Doctrine of Merit, but, with a due Attention to Protestantism, we have a Right to consider this as an Instance, in which the *merciful Man doth Good to his own Soul*.
 Prov. xi. 17. A Being always imperfectly good, and generally
 Luk. xvii. 10. *unprofitable* at best, must be left to derive every reasonable Comfort from the Promises of God, and from the Motives, upon which he has served his Creator and Redeemer.

The Perpetuity and universal Prevalency of the Christian Religion appears to be one of the gracious Designs of Him, who first formed that wonderful Dispensation; and though so great a Design, which comprehends an Extent and Duration, adequate only to the Plans of Divine Wisdom, cannot be carried on without Aid and Protection from above; it must be partly executed by human Means; and thus the Promotion of Christian Knowledge becomes a very important Duty of all, who are blessed with it; and the Numbers, of which this Society consists, form an Evidence, that Christianity is still in its progressive State in this Country.

If the Apostle, zealous as he was himself, were a Witness to the Extent of your Zeal and Charity;
 in

in an Age, in which Irreligion is so industriously counteracting you, he would honour you with the most affectionate Terms of Approbation. We may presume to conjecture, from his Writings, some of the very Words, in which he would probably address you :

“ I thank my God, through Jesus Christ, for
“ you all, that your Faith is spoken of through-
“ out the World.

“ We are bound to thank God always for you,
“ Brethren, as it is meet, because that your Faith
“ groweth exceedingly, and the Charity of every
“ one of you all towards each other aboundeth.

“ Be not weary in well doing ; God is not un-
“ righteous to forget your Work and Labour, that
“ proceedeth of Love, which Love ye have shewed
“ for his Name’s Sake.”

F I N I S.

A
S E R M O N

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Of the YEARLY MEETING of the
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MDCCLXXXI.

PROV. XI. 25.

AND HE THAT WATERETH, SHALL BE
WATERED ALSO HIMSELF.

THE communications of knowledge to the uninstructed mind are, in the eastern stile of metaphor, resembled to brooks of water drawn into a thirsty land, or the dew of heaven falling down upon it. The figure is natural and expressive: for instruction is grateful to the soul, inquisitive after truth and wise counsel, as the living stream is refreshing to the parched soil. The spirit thirsting after knowledge, in pursuit of happiness, will be revived from the fountains of understanding opened to it; and the intellectual soul animated in its progress towards perfection in moral refinement and christian virtue,

And blessed is he that conveyeth wisdom unto the simple! He enricheth himself, whilst he improveth others in understanding. “The waters “drawn out of the fountains of salvation,” according to the prophet’s stile, will leave a part of their treasure in the bosom of the channel through which they are conveyed. The mind, by its communications of knowledge, grows daily more improved, and confirmed in its own principles; and proceedeth from strength to strength in intellect, defining and comprehending them better, through the subjects which it contemplates, and through the means which it maketh use of, to instil the elements of Christian science pure and undefiled into the hearts of its disciples. Thus “to him that hath,” and “improveth his talent, shall be given,” saith the great Author of our religion; and the portion of his faculties, as a natural reward, will be augmented.

Our Lord speaketh of the knowledge revealed to the world through his gospel, under the idea of *living* water, or of water that springeth up and nourisheth unto everlasting life. Jesus saith unto the woman of Samaria, “If thou knewest the gift of “God” to mankind in my dispensation and mission, “and who it is that saith unto thee, give me to
 4 “drink,

“ drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he
 “ would have given thee living water. Whofo-
 “ ever drinketh of this water,” of the water which
 I now ask of thee, whoever contenteth himself with
 the temporary gratification of his mere bodily appe-
 tites, shall thirst again. He will find those appe-
 tites of his corporeal nature returning again upon
 him. “ But whosoever drinketh of the water that
 “ I shall give him, shall never thirst: but the
 “ water that I shall give him shall be a well of
 “ water,” a never-failing fountain, springing up
 and exalting to eternal life, where he shall not be
 pained with the returns of bodily wants and ap-
 petites any more. If we knew and valued our
 supreme interest aright, we should answer with
 this woman, “ Sir, give me this water, that I
 “ thirst not, neither come again hither to drink;”
 thy doctrine is sufficient to all the purposes of
 spiritual animation, and life eternal.

The eager desire of the soul after divine con-
 templation, and admission into the favourable pre-
 sence of God in his temple, is, in the language
 of the Psalmist, expressed by one of the keenest
 sensations and impulses of the human appetites,
 that of thirst. *My soul is athirst for God, yea,*

even for the living God : when I shall come to appear before the presence of God ? So the gratification of that desire might be well expressed by water ; and a free continued acquaintance with the divine nature and attributes, and fuller instruction in the divine will, by living water.

An illustration of the text may possibly be derived, from allusion to an ancient custom in those countries, where they had little or no rain, and where natural rivers did not abound, of drawing canals, or rills of water through their lands, from whence their grounds and gardens were watered. And he that drew water through his neighbour's land, watered therewith his own. Their water was raised from the lower to the higher lands, by means of pipes and forcing engines, which they put in motion, and worked with their feet. Hence probably the expression in the book of Deuteronomy, of watering the land with their *foot* *. This, no doubt, was a laborious task, as appears from the privilege of being delivered from it : for this deliverance is enumerated among the blessings of Canaan, and of obedience in that land to the voice of the Lord their God. *For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence*

* Deut.
xi. 10.

*ye came out ; where thou sowedst thy seed, and water-
edst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs : but the
land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and
vallies, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven †.*

But whether the water descended from above, or through the channels of the earth, the design of the metaphor was still the same, to illustrate the reward of liberality and public munificence. Thus in the current of waters an eddy is oft observed, which, in its circulating course, brings round the floating substance again to the place from whence it set out.

But it must here be further observed, that the Chaldee paraphrase on the text is, “ He that *teacheth* shall be *taught*, or *instructed* also himself.” This interpretation is not foreign from

† This custom of raising water, and of filling canals and aqueducts therewith, and so watering their fields and gardens by means of engines, which they work with their feet, prevails in some of the eastern countries unto this day ; as I have been informed by a very worthy and ingenious friend, who resided some time in those parts, and was curious in his observations upon culture.

the

the original*. The sense conveyed is the same in both. The only difference is, that according to one construction it is literal, in the other it is metaphorical. Both express the reciprocal benefits arising from the communications of knowledge.

The text thus explained, with the observations made upon it, leads us to the following heads of consideration, respecting,

First, the duty,

Secondly, the modes, and most effectual means,

Thirdly, the reward and mutual benefits of communicating science, especially religious instruction, to mankind.

First,

* Vid. Pagninum, qui Hieron. & R. David citat in hunc locum de voce ירה, sub radice ירה *jecit, projecit, docuit, &c.* hoc verbum potest dici, (inquit Pagninus) *significare generaliter jacere, vel lapidem, vel sagittam, vel rem quamcunque aliam, vel etiam pluviam, & tum affinitatem habet cum ירה quod est rigare; item doctrinam metaphoricè; quod est docere; est enim metaphora à guttis pluviae ducta, quarum more doc-*
trina

First, If we consider the duty by the law of nature, the man, who shews to the wandering traveller his way, does no more than light, as it were, his neighbour's torch by his own. This is nothing more than an act incumbent upon common humanity, to which the ordinary feelings of a social being, impressed by nature, that is, by the God of nature, urge us all. For there are certain acts of tributary kindness due from social beings connected to each other, and made respectively subordinate by the very frame of their constitution; acts of communicative goodness, essential to their mutual accommodation and guidance through the paths of this lower world. For "if the blind lead the blind, they would both fall into the pit of destruction together."

Communication of thoughts, of mutual counsel, and designs of action, was one original intent and main

trina homines alioqui inscios instruit, & fecundat, ut illæ terram. Videtur autem hic מ loco ה poni; sicut in Hebræis Bibliis non inusitatum. In quibusdam etiam exemplaribus scriptum est ירה, ut inter varias eruditissimi Kennicotti lectiones videre licet. Consule etiam Guarini Lexicon sub eadem radice. In eodem sensu vox ירה redditur in versione nostrâ Anglicanâ, Hof. x. 12. donec veniat, & pluat vobis justitiam, quod alii reddunt, & doceat vos justitiam.

main use of speech : and so language becomes one common bond and cement of society, and mutual connexion of men amongst each other. This it is, saith the great Roman philosopher, that by means of mutually conversing, teaching and learning, debating and judging, conciliates the several members of the moral creation to each other, and collects and joins them in civil union. Thus are the several parts of the rational world designed to be conducive to the cultivation and improvement of each other ; as every branch of the whole creation is made subservient to the good order of the universal system ; to the happiness therein of the intellectual part ; and, above all, to the glory of the great Creator.

What now saith the law of Christ, which is a reinforcement of the law of nature, by authority more eminent, by express revelation from above ? We are all esteemed by this law accountable, as rational agents, for the application of the several talents intrusted to each of us, for the common benefit of the moral system. One of which is the light of knowledge. “ Do men,” saith the divine Legislator, “ light a candle to place it under a vessel to be hid ; and not rather set it on a candlestick,

“ dleſtick, that all who are in the houſe,” that great houſhold the world, “ may ſee the light ?”

Nature dictates, in the voice of common reaſon and morality, the propriety, fitneſs, and humanity of delineating good rules of life, and diſplaying good examples of virtue to the world. True philoſophy, as far as it was able, collected and promulgated ſuch precepts to the Gentiles. Chriſtianity came, and both approved and confirmed the dictate. “ Let your light,” your light of Chriſtian knowledge, ſaith the Author of our religion, “ ſo ſhine before men,” not indeed ſo as to be gazed at merely for oſtentation-ſake ; but that your fellow-beings may be led thereby to virtue, and “ ſeeing your good works, may glorify your “ Father which is in heaven.”

“ A light,” ſaith he, “ that is ſet on an hill, “ cannot be hid.” Chriſtians were ſelected out of the race of mankind to exhibit that light. Your light of chriſtian morals is to be lifted up, as a beacon ſet on an hill, to guide the inexperienced mariner in his courſe. It will thus be a public benefit, iſſuing from an improvement of the human underſtanding ; a bleſſing diffuſed over the

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human.

human race; and shining forth, in the moral refinement of intellectual creatures on their progress towards perfection; and consequently will be an addition to that tribute of glory, which is for ever due to the universal Creator.

The first head then requires no further proof, either from nature or revelation, from reason, or the gospel of the ever-blessed Jesus. The common impulses of humanity, as well as the precepts of Christianity, support it. Proceed we therefore to enquire,

Secondly, Into the modes, the best approved and most effectual means of distributing our bounty towards the dispensation of this grace of knowledge, the diffusion of this light by the gospel; and of making the best improvement thereof, by implanting and cultivating it in the hearts of our fellow-creatures,

Among these, the early education of children in christian principles, must, in the first place, strike every serious humane breast among us. Accordingly we find this, in the original meetings of this society, to have been the first object of their beneficence.

ficence. The institution commenced in this truly laudable design, the promotion of a right plan for the religious education of the children of the poor, the child of the widow, and the helpless orphan, the child of the careless and vicious parent, and for the preservation of the destitute in the paths of honesty.

Great, it is to be hoped, is the number of those, whom this parental care hath saved; rescuing many out of the streets and lanes of corruption, where simplicity and innocence would soon have been tainted, and the fountains of life poisoned; saying to the indigent, in the welcome invitation of the prophet, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, " come ye to the waters, come, and drink of the " waters of life; come, buy" learning and knowledge, without money, and without price. " Incline your ear to instruction," saith Wisdom in this your institution; "hear, and your soul shall " live!"

Now the value of the bounty contributed to any beneficent purpose, is to be estimated by the value of the interest concerned. As the soul then is superior to the body, the interest of the former hav-

ing so much the pre-eminence over the latter, the provision made for its improvement and welfare must be proportionably the more important.

The right education of children hath, by some ancient nations, been deemed of such consequence, as to have been made a matter of public statute. They took them, by law of the state, out of the hands of their parents, and subjected them to public discipline and institution. Happy would it be for this country, if parents would be more careful within their own walls, than they usually are, to keep a guard over the early morals and religious principles of their children, and domestics!

For we may, in reality, ascribe much of the lewdness and intemperance of growing youth, and maturer manhood, much of the licentiousness and profligacy of the present times, to a want of proper seed of discretion sown in due season, of sound moral and religious principles, of distinction between good and evil to be implanted in tender minds, to bind the conscience; and of regular discipline and controul over the years of childhood.

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It is *your* praise, my brethren, united in this society of parental love, that as far as your ability and extent of inspection reacheth, you so far endeavour to correct and remedy this evil.

I might here speak of the danger of leaving children and young persons to pick up principles and opinions for themselves, as the wind shall scatter them over the face of the earth; where they may suck in poison instead of food; and meet the venom of asps, while they seek for grateful nourishment. For the serpent lurketh, and never more successfully, than in the flowery paths of youth, where he biteth most fatally in the way of pleasure.

But the perils of neglecting childhood, and the advantages arising from the right institution of youth, have been so fully delineated by much abler hands in this place, that I shall not attempt to add any thing further upon this branch of your establishment; nor can I aim to improve upon the plan of culture in general laid down by them. It is sufficient just to hint to minds like yours the usefulness of the institution to the objects of your care, and the benefits naturally resulting from
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thence to the public. For I am now called to a second branch of your piety, which is the confirmation of those in sound religion and morals, whose tender minds your guardianship hath formed to early virtue. For this purpose, you have wisely and liberally, in proportion to your ability, provided, in the dispersion of solid, plain, and easy tracts of piety and morality among your lower brethren; especially, and above all, the book of life. Such useful treatises many young persons, in the straitness of their circumstances, might not have been well able to purchase at their full price: many through their thoughtless levity might not have been inclined to purchase them. But when such books are gratuitously put into their hands, or, through means of your bounty, rendered a cheap and easy purchase to them, they cannot well forbear to cast their eyes upon them, and examine their contents, which may at length challenge their attention and serious contemplation.

These will be good means of counteracting that poison, which, in these days, is so artfully and industriously scattered, and so heedlessly picked up by incautious hands. Such as is conveyed in books of professed infidelity, by authors openly denying the
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the Lord who bought them; in books of *insidious* scepticism, craftily leading to infidelity; in tracts of lewdness, and an immoral cast; in tracts of enthusiasm and sedition, hostile to government, and to every branch of our happy constitution, both in church and state, wherewith the present age, to its great disgrace, so fertility abounds.

Strange, that in an age of light, and affecting the character of science, so many should be reverting back again into all the darkness of illiterate, wild enthusiasm; others, into all the madness of unprincipled, uncontrolled licentiousness, under the name and cloak of supporting liberty: for licentiousness and true liberty are incompatible names and things, mutually destructive to each other. The present juncture then calls for books of the most serious cast, to correct the venom which such virulent tracts have spread before unguarded minds; to impress religion, and the fear of God, and thereby inculcate loyalty, as a branch of christian morals.

We have but too lately seen, alas! into what confusion and terror, how near to the brink of ruin and ashes, our civil dissensions, and the cla-

mours of faction, deceiving the multitude, had shamefully reduced our city, in the unhappy commencement of the last summer. God be thanked, that through the superintendence of his Providence, the rage was permitted to be but short, for it was cruel: wherein, through the voice of sedition, and the subtle operations of the malevolent, some of the best of men, and the ablest to give counsel, and to preserve our state against the foreign and domestic enemy, were the first pointed out as victims to popular fury and resentment. God grant, that we may never experience the like again in any part of our gracious sovereign's dominions! Let us labour to prevent it by wholesome books of loyalty spread among the people, and put industriously into their hands from the beginning of life! And let us be watchful over those whom we appoint teachers and school-masters, as persons capable, in their respective charges, of promoting the greatest good, or propagating the most noxious evil by poisoning the minds of the rising generation!

But your munificence, my brethren in this labour of love, doth not terminate here, within the limits of your own land. The full extended view

of this Society takes in a much larger circumference: for as it aims at the instruction of youth, and the confirmation of ripened years at home, comprehending within your tutelage the principality of Wales, and the neighbouring Isles of Man and Scilly, by the publication of the Book of Life in their respective languages; so also doth a

Third branch of your liberal care extend itself to persons of all nations, barbarians as well as civilized; by the mission of teachers and catechists into the remotest corners of the earth, for the conversion of Indians; by the distribution of religious tracts among those that *are* converted, for their fuller instruction and confirmation in the faith. Thus “to them that sat in darkness, and “the shadow of death, hath the light shined;” and through the continuation of your munificence may still shine “more and more, unto the perfect “day.” For the poor of every quarter under heaven, as well as the rich, “have thus the gospel “preached unto them.”

But as it is impossible for the wisest and best framed institutions upon earth always to escape the tongue of censure, and the spleen of the malignant,

merely sometimes perhaps for this very reason, because they *are* friendly to virtue and religion; nay, sometimes to escape the jaundiced eye of mis-conception and prejudice, or the misapprehensions of the well-meaning, but misled and injudicious; so it may be expedient, before I proceed to my last general head, to offer some reply to the objector, and try to satisfy the doubtful.

Let it not then any longer be objected to these seminaries of virtue, that children come hereby to be inflated with pride, and exalted above their station. For it is not criminal pride to learn to *labour truly*, in every situation of life, low as well as high, in which it shall please the providence of God to place them. No: the first element of christian doctrine is humility, from their Saviour's birth in a stable, to his sufferings on the cross.

Pride is not founded on the improvement of the understanding, but on the weakness of it: not on the precepts of the meek and humble Jesus, but on the rude presumptions of an unsubdued, untutored vanity. Unless it be such pride, as raiseth the heart above vice and base slavery to mean and
 sensual

sensual passion. Such pride is laudable. Vicious pride is founded in ignorance, and is a proof of imbecillity in judgment. It is an uncultivated mind, which is the mother of self-conceit, ready to dictate to superiors, and disclaim in itself a subordination to any controul.

For which reason, there are not more flagrant instances of arrogant and conceited positiveness in opinion to be met with in the world, than among the lowest and least civilized part of the human race. A pride, which is to be corrected only by a cultivation of the understanding to a better knowledge of itself. Whereas such ignorance, and its associate enthusiasm, have been not only hurtful to the private individual, but the causes of sectarism, often perilous, and sometimes destructive to states. Instruct men well, and they will be more likely to conform themselves to the meekness and simplicity “that is in Christ.”

True Christianity teacheth man to know himself; and self-knowledge will soon convince him how little he hath to be proud of. It will teach him his own deficiencies; which to every true discerner of himself will be sufficiently humiliating.

True Christianity, like its Author, is all meekness and condescension, and lowliness of mind and heart: for it states before us the condition of human nature; and such humiliation and modesty will be the best ground of subsequent advancement in moral and intellectual excellence. The meekness of Christ will be the best monitor against the swelling spirit, the ablest tutor and controller of the human heart.

But we may observe further, that different qualifications are requisite, even for the menial offices of life, in different ages and countries, proportioned to the different advancement of those countries in science. Such talents in reading, writing, and cyphering, are now requisite in many families, as would have been sufficient for higher offices in former ages; and many a place in a good creditable family hath been lost for want of these qualifications. It is made almost a constant inquiry about those who offer themselves for service, in many families, whether they have a competent skill in these recommendatory arts.

It will ever be a matter of inquiry in *serious* families, what their *religion* is; whether they have
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been bred up in *any*; and in what *profession*; whether in principles calculated to keep them honest, faithful, and diligent; or in vague, enthusiastic notions, without any steady principle.

Furthermore, that portion of knowledge might be sufficient for the lower ranks, and the supply of domestic offices in one country, as for instance, among barbarians and savages, which would not be so in another; which would appear pitiable in our own. But however this may be, we are to do the best we can for our brethren in life, to qualify them for their respective situations in it; not only to make them useful here, but also happy hereafter. We can never affirm, that any persons are the worse for the improvement of their understandings. It would be an impeachment of our own to suppose it. It would be an ill return to the God who gave us faculties for our cultivation. Our duty certainly is to improve the human intellect, wherever it falls within our reach, and extend the blessings of the gospel of Jesus as wide as we can.

Education in religion and industry will be the best preservative of innocence. And innocence, and her sister modesty, will be mutual guardians to each other.

other. It is idleness, joined with vanity, uncontrolled by any solid, rational principle, that often gives a loose to the licentious tongue, the tongue of abuse; hardens the countenance, and brings forth the stubborn look of defiance against magistracy and legal government. Where then shall we find the foundations of integrity, of the moral man, of the sincere Christian, of the sober, peaceable member of the state, laid so well, and so securely amongst the lower ranks, as in these schools and nurseries of early virtue? The books dispersed by this Society, as they tend to secure the foundation, so will they likewise promote the moral superstructure.

Such, my brethren, united in this Society of religion, is your pious intention, such your labour of love in the Lord. Give me leave now to proceed briefly in the

Third and last place, to the reward of your labour. And here the blessings might be considered either in a public or a private view, as national or domestic; blessings upon families, as well as individuals. For he, who lighteth up his neighbour's torch by his own, addeth thereby a lustre to his own hemisphere. He, that teacheth another, contri-

buteth thereby to the common stock of knowledge ;
“ and look, what he layeth out, it shall be paid
“ him again !” He layeth in the breast of others
a foundation of still further public improvement.
And commercial states, that have sown moral and
religious knowledge, and promoted advancement
therewith in natural science, will reap frequent re-
turns of gratitude from the strength and alliance of
the people whom they have civilized, and nurtured
up in literature. Thus “ he that watereth, shall
“ be watered also himself.”

For that I may conclude, my brethren, in words
of divine encouragement, to this land of liberality ;
“ If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and
“ give water of *instruction* to the thirsty, and sa-
“ tisfy the empty soul, then shall the Lord guide
“ thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought ;”
when thy soul thirsteth after counsel, in the day
of doubtfulness, and the hour of trouble, the dew
of heaven shall descend upon thee ; divine wisdom
shall sink into thine heart ; “ and thou shalt be
“ like a watered garden, and like a spring of waters,
“ whose waters fail not.”

F I N I S.

A
S E R M O N

Preached in the CATHEDRAL CHURCH of
ST. PAUL, LONDON:
On THURSDAY, MAY the 2^d, 1782.

BEING THE TIME
Of the YEARLY MEETING of the
CHILDREN Educated in the CHARITY-
SCHOOLS, in and about the Cities of LONDON
and WESTMINSTER.

By the Right Reverend FATHER in GOD,
BEILBY, Lord Bishop of CHESTER.

Published at the Request of the SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE,
And the TRUSTEES of the several SCHOOLS.

To which is annexed,
AN ACCOUNT OF THE
SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

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L U K E VII. 22.

THEN JESUS ANSWERING SAID UNTO THEM, GO YOUR WAY, AND TELL JOHN WHAT THINGS YE HAVE SEEN AND HEARD; HOW THAT THE BLIND SEE, THE LAME WALK, THE LEPERS ARE CLEANSED, THE DEAF HEAR, THE DEAD ARE RAISED, TO THE POOR THE GOSPEL IS PREACHED;

YOU will immediately recollect the occasion on which these words were spoken. They make a part of the answer which our Saviour gave to the two disciples whom John the Baptist sent to him, to ask whether he was the great Deliverer that was to come, or they were to look for another. The whole passage is a remarkable one, and affords ample matter for observation; but

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the particular circumstance, to which I mean to draw your attention at present, is the last clause of the text, in which we are told, that TO THE POOR THE GOSPEL IS PREACHED.

That our Lord should appeal to the miracles which he had just wrought before the eyes of the two disciples, as an incontestible proof that he was the Messiah, will be thought very natural and proper; but that he should immediately subjoin to this, as an *additional* proof; and a proof on which he seems to lay as much stress as on the other, that TO THE POOR THE GOSPEL WAS PREACHED, may appear at the first view a little extraordinary. We shall, however, soon be satisfied that in this, as well as in every other instance, our divine Master acted with consummate wisdom. He was speaking to Jews. His object was to convince them that he was the MESSIAH. The obvious way of doing this was to shew that he corresponded to the description which their own prophets gave of that great personage. Now *they* speak of him as one, who should not only give eyes to the blind, ears to the deaf, feet to the lame,

lame, and speech to the dumb, but should also
 PREACH GOOD TIDINGS TO THE MEEK AND THE ^{* Ifaiah}
 POOR *; these were two *distinct and separate marks* ^{xxix. 18,}
 by which he was to be known, and it was therefore ^{19. xxxv.}
^{5, 6.} ^{lxi. 1.}
 as proper and necessary for our Saviour to refer to
 the one as to the other. Whoever pretended to be
 the MESSIAH, must unite in himself these two great
 discriminating peculiarities, which taken together
 form one of the most illustrious and beneficent cha-
 racters that can be imagined; a character distinguished
 by the communication of the greatest of all earthly
 blessings to two descriptions of men, who stood
 most in need of assistance, *the diseased, and the poor*.
 To the former, the promised Saviour of the world
 was to give *health*; to the latter, *spiritual in-*
struction. In this manner was the great Re-
 deemer marked out by the prophets, and this glo-
 rious distinction did Christ display and support in
 his own person throughout the whole course of
 his ministry.

That he was infinitely superior to every other
 teacher of religion in the number, and the benevo-

lent nature of his miracles, is well known; and that he was no less distinguished by the circumstance of PREACHING TO THE POOR; that there was no one either before or after him, who made it so much his peculiar business to instruct them, and paid such constant and condescending attention to them as he did, is equally certain. The antient prophets were usually sent to kings and princes, to the rich and the great, and many of their prophecies were couched in sublime figurative language, beyond the comprehension of the vulgar. There were indeed other parts of the Jewish scriptures sufficiently plain and intelligible, and adapted to all capacities; but even these the rabbies and the scribes, the great expounders of the law among the Jews, contrived to perplex and darken, and render almost useless by their vain traditions, their absurd glosses, and childish interpretations. So far were they from showing any particular regard or tenderness to the common people, that they held them in the utmost contempt; they considered them

* John vii. as *accursed* *, because they knew not that law, which
 48, 49. they themselves took care to render impenetrably obscure to them. “ They took away the key of
 “ know-

“ knowledge ; they entered not in themselves, and • Luke
 “ those that were entering in they hindered*.” It ^{xi. 52.}
 was even a proverbial saying among them, *that the
 Spirit of God did not rest but upon a rich man* †. So
 different were the maxims of the great Jewish
 teachers from the sentiments and conduct of that
 heavenly Instructor, who openly declared, and glo-
 ried in the declaration, that he came “ TO PREACH
 “ THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR †.”

Nor did the lower ranks of mankind meet with
 better treatment in the Heathen world. There
 were among the antient Pagans, at different periods,
 and in different countries, many excellent moral

† Grotius on Matth. xi. 5.

† It may be alledged, that by *the Poor*, to whom our Lord preached
 the gospel, the sacred writers meant not the poor in *circumstances*,
 but the poor *in spirit*. The truth is, they meant both ; by our Savi-
 our's conduct both senses were equally verified ; and these two sorts of
poverty are so frequently found united, that it is scarce necessary, at
 least in the present instance, to distinguish between them. For more
 complete satisfaction on this and some other points (of which but a
 very imperfect view is given here) see Bishop Hurd's admirable sermon
 on Matth. v. 3. s. 8.

writers

writers of fine talents and profound knowledge ; but their compositions were calculated not for the illiterate and the indigent, but for men of ability and erudition like themselves. They thought the poor below their notice or regard ; they could not stoop so low as to accommodate themselves to the understandings of the vulgar. Their ambition even in their ethical treatises, was to please the learned few. To these the Dialogues of Plato, the Ethics of Aristotle, the Offices of Cicero, the Morals of Seneca and of Plutarch, might afford both entertainment and information ; but had they been read to a Grecian or a Roman peasant, he would not, I conceive, have found himself either much enlightened or much improved by them. How should *he* get wisdom from such sources “ that holdeth the plough, and that
 “ glorieth in the goad ; that driveth oxen, and is
 “ occupied in their labours ; that giveth his mind
 “ to make furrows, and is diligent to give the kine
 “ fodder *.” Very different occupations these from the studies of the philosopher or the metaphysician, and not very well calculated to prepare the mind
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* Ecclus
 xxxviii.
 25, 26.

for the lectures of the academy, the Lyceum, or the Portico.

The truth is, there was not a single book of morality at that time written solely or principally for the use of the ignorant and the poor; nor had they their duty explained to them in any other mode of instruction adapted to their capacities. They had no lessons of conduct given them so plain, so familiar, so forcible, so authoritative, as those which are now regularly dispensed to every Christian congregation; nothing that made the smallest approach to our Saviour's divine discourses, (especially that from the Mount) to the ten commandments, to the other moral parts of the Old and New Testament, or to the practical instructions and exhortations given weekly to the people by the ministers of the gospel. They were left to form a system of morality for themselves as well as they could; in which they were so far from being assisted by their national religion, that both the mode and the objects of their worship, were of themselves sufficient to corrupt their hearts, and to counteract any right opinions or virtuous inclinations

clinations that might casually spring up in their minds.

In this situation did our blessed Lord find the inferior class of mankind when he entered upon his ministry. He found them without guide, instructor, counsellor, or friend. He saw them (to use the affecting language of Scripture) “fainting and scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd, and he had compassion upon them*.” He took them instantly under his protection, he shared with them the miseries of their condition. He assumed the form of a servant, submitted to all the hardships of that situation, and frequently “had not even where to lay his head.” Although he did not *reject* the wealthy and the great, but on the contrary received them with the utmost kindness, whenever they shewed any marks of a right and teachable disposition, yet not “*many* noble, not *many* mighty, were at first called †.” It was from among fishermen and mechanics that he chose his companions and apostles. It was to the poor he chiefly addressed his discourses. With these he principally lived and conversed;

* Matth.
ix. 36.

† 1 Cor.
i. 26.

conversed, and to their understandings was the greater part of his parables, his allusions, his reasonings, his precepts, and his exhortations, most kindly accommodated. "He taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes*." He taught them with a clearness, a simplicity, a dignity, a tenderness to which they had never before been accustomed, insomuch, that the "common people" heard him gladly; they were astonished at his doctrine, they wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth, and they declared with one voice, that never man spake as he spake †.

* Matth.
vii. 29.

† Mark
xii. 37.
Matth.
vii. 28.

Thus did our heavenly Instructor most exactly fulfil the predictions of the prophets and his own declarations, that he would EVANGELIZE TO THE POOR. The consequence was what might naturally be expected from a measure, as full of wisdom as it was of humanity, although totally opposite to the usual practice of moral teachers. In a short space of time that gospel which was at first preached more particularly to the poor,

Luke iv.
22.
John vii.
46.

was embraced also by the *rich*; and became in a few centuries the established religion of the most powerful and extensive empire in the world; as it now is of all the most civilized and most enlightened kingdoms of the earth. Whereas the renowned sages of antiquity, by pursuing a contrary course, by making it their only object to please, amuse, and inform the learned and the great, were never able with all their wisdom and eloquence, to enlighten or reform a single province, or even a single city of any note or magnitude*.

“† 1 Cor. i. 26.” We

* Hence it is obvious to remark, how very unfortunately those writers against Christianity have employed their time and labour, who have taken so much pains to prove that among the first converts to that religion, there were but few in proportion of any considerable rank or fortune. This is a charge which the first preachers of the gospel were so far from wishing to deny or dissemble, that they openly avowed and gloried in it†. Their successors have as little reason to be afraid, or ashamed of acknowledging the fact as they had. They justly consider it as one proof, among many others, of that *divine wisdom* which superintended and conducted the progress of Christianity,

in

† 1 Cor.
i. 26.

We have here then the utmost encouragement to tread in the steps of our divine Lawgiver, and to imitate, as far as we are able, that method of propagating his religion which he adopted, and which was attended with such signal success. Although it is undoubtedly our duty “to preach the gospel “to every creature*,” to press it on all ranks of people, high and low, rich and poor; yet the example of our Lord plainly calls upon us to show a peculiar attention to those whom Providence has placed in the humbler conditions of life. The reasons for this are obvious: they are the same which probably influenced our Saviour’s conduct in this respect, and they still subsist in their full force. The poor have in general much fewer opportunities of learning their duty themselves than the wealthy and the great: their education seldom qualifies them, and their constant cares and labours leave them but little leisure for acquiring

* Mark
xvi. 15.

B₂ sufficient

in a way so different from what *worldly wisdom* would have dictated; beginning with the cottage and ending with the imperial throne. False religion has generally reversed this order, and has succeeded accordingly.

sufficient religious knowledge without assistance. Their spiritual as well as temporal necessities are but too often overlooked, and disregarded by their superiors, and yet they form by far the largest and most necessary part of the community. Add to all this, that they are commonly much freer from prejudice, much less wedded to systems and opinions, more open to conviction, more anxious to obtain information, and more ready to embrace truth, than the higher ranks of men. These circumstances evidently point them out as objects highly worthy of our utmost care and diligence, in furnishing their minds with those sacred truths, those rules of moral and religious conduct, which are necessary to render them “wise unto salvation.”

With this view it was that THE SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE was first instituted. It breathes the true spirit of christianity, and follows, at a humble distance, the example of its divine Author, by diffusing the light of the gospel more especially among the POOR. This is its peculiar province and employment; and there are

two ways in which it carries this benevolent purpose into execution.

The first is, by encouraging the erection of charity schools in every part of the kingdom, and by supplying them afterwards with proper religious instructions, and wholesome rules for their direction and good government. The fruit of these its pious labours and exhortations in this city and its neighbourhood, you have now before your eyes. You here see near five thousand children collected together from the charity schools in and about London and Westminster. A spectacle this, which is not, perhaps, to be paralleled in any other country in the world; which it is impossible for any man of the least sensibility to contemplate without emotions of tenderness and delight; which we may venture to say, that even our Lord himself (who always shewed a remarkable affection for children) would have looked on with complacency; and which speaks more forcibly in favour of this branch of the Society's paternal care and attention, than any arguments

ments for it that words could convey to you *. I shall, therefore, only observe on this head, that large as the number is of the charity children now present in this place, it bears but a small proportion to the whole number in the schools of Great-Britain and Ireland, which exceeds *forty thousand*. And when you consider that this Society was the original promoter, and has been the constant patron and protector of these schools, which have subsisted now for near a century; that the children educated in them are taken from the most indigent and helpless class of people; that consequently, without these schools, they would probably have had no education at all; and that nothing is so likely to preserve them from idleness, beggary, profligacy and misery, as impressing early and strongly on their unoccupied

* The trustees of the charity schools obtained permission this year to range the children (amounting to near five thousand) in a kind of temporary amphitheatre under the dome of St. Paul's, where the service was performed, and the sermon preached, the congregation occupying the area. The effect of so large a number of children, disposed in that form, and uniting with one voice in the responses and in the psalm-singing, was wonderfully pleasing and affecting. This practice, I understand, is meant to be continued.

and uncorrupted minds found principles of piety, industry, honesty and sobriety ; you will be sensible that the Society has adopted a plan no less beneficial to the public, than conformable to the sentiments of the great Author of our religion, in recommending charity schools as one very effectual method of
PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR.

But the Society goes still further than this. It does not confine its cares merely to the *childhood* of the Poor ; it follows them, with unremitted kindness, through every subsequent period of their lives. It is the guard of their youth, the companion of their manhood, the comfort of their old age. The principal part of its employment is to provide, at a very considerable expence, and to disperse among the lower people of all ages and occupations, a very large number of bibles, common prayer-books, and small tracts, on a variety of religious subjects, composed purposely for their use by men of eminent piety and ability, adapted to their capacities, and accommodated to all their various spiritual wants. In these are explained to them, in the clearest and
most

most familiar terms, the first grounds and rudiments of their faith, the main evidences and most essential doctrines of christianity, the several duties they owe to God, their neighbour, and themselves, and the nature and benefits of the two christian sacraments. By these also they are assisted in the service of the church, in their private devotions, in reading, understanding, and applying the holy scriptures; are supported under afflictions, are guarded against temptation, are fortified more especially against those vices to which the poor are most subject, and furnished with proper cautions and arguments, to preserve them from the artifices of popery, and the delusions of enthusiasm.

This is a short sketch of the several objects to which the governing members of our Society have directed their attention, and the provision they have made for the instruction of the ignorant and the poor. Of the little treatises here alluded to, some might undoubtedly be much improved, and some, perhaps, might be spared. But many of them are excellent, the greatest part extremely useful, and
calculated

calculated to do essential service to that rank of men among whom they are distributed. Nor is the benevolence of our Society restrained within the limits of this island only. Its principal object is indeed, as it certainly ought to be, the instruction of our own poor ; but it has occasionally extended its kind assistance to other countries, both neighbouring and remote. It has established schools and missions in various parts of the East Indies, for the conversion and instruction of the Heathens ; and has dispersed among them many religious tracts in the Malabar language. It has carried its regard to the Greek church in Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, Arabia, and Egypt. For this purpose it has printed the new testament and psalter in Arabic, and has already sent a large number of both, with some other tracts, into Persia and India. It has published three several editions of the bible in the Welsh language, and distributed them through every part of Wales, to the amount of fifty thousand copies. It has made provision for the education of youth, and the due celebration of divine worship, in the Scilly Islands, where there was the

utmost need of both; and it has likewise printed and dispersed over the Isle of Man many thousand copies of the old and new testament, of the common prayer, and other religious books, in the vulgar language of that island*.

By this constant attention of the managers of the Society to the spiritual wants of the poor in many different parts of the world, as well as at home, the number of religious tracts and books which they have distributed, from their first institution to this day, is so immensely great, as almost to exceed belief†. And, although, in some instances, the success of their endeavours has not fully answered their expectations, yet there can be no doubt but that upon the whole their labours have done infinite service to the cause of religion. Indeed, all the Clergy who are members of the Society, and have made a constant and discreet use of their tracts, can

* See the account of the Society's proceedings subjoined to this sermon.

† Even within the last fifty years, the number of books and tracts distributed by them has amounted to no less than 2,834,371.

bear,

bear, and many of them *have* borne, ample testimony to the advantages resulting from them. Next to the stated offices of divine worship, and the regular instructions from the pulpit, it is evident, that nothing can contribute more to excite and keep alive a due sense of religion in the minds of the common people, than supplying them constantly with a variety of well-composed and well-chosen religious treatises, each of them judiciously adapted to their respective necessities. It supplies, in some degree, the want of that most useful branch of ministerial duty which has, I fear, of late years, grown but too much into disuse, *personal conference with our parishioners*; for which, unless we have some such substitute as this, we shall find, probably, that our public instructions will produce much less effect than they naturally ought.

There is another argument for the distribution of small religious tracts among the common people, which has, I think, considerable weight. It appears, that this is the very mode made use of by two of our most formidable enemies, I mean, Infidels

and Papists; by the one to *corrupt* religion, and by the other to *destroy* it. There are undoubted proofs that the former recommend, and practise it, as the most effectual method of disseminating irreligion among all ranks of people*; and we know, from our own experience in this country, that the latter are indefatigable in dispersing a multitude of little books, most artfully composed, in defence of the several superstitious doctrines of their church, in order to impose on the credulity of the vulgar, and seduce them into their communion†.

* It is certain, that M. Voltaire, in particular, has written innumerable little pieces against Revelation; that he prided himself greatly in having found out this method of *enlightening the world*; and that he was highly applauded by Mr. D'Alembert and others, for the wisdom and prudence of his conduct in this respect.

† The industry of the Roman Catholics, in supplying their people with a vast variety of small tracts on religious subjects, is no secret. In a funeral discourse lately published on the death of an eminent divine of the Romish church, *Richard Chalonier*, who is called *Bishop of Debra, and Apostolic Vicar of the London District*, may be seen a list of near forty Popish tracts, in recommendation of his religion, which were all the produce of his single pen.

Let

Let us then endeavour to foil our enemies at their own weapons, which will surely prove more powerful, and more successful, in the hands of truth, than in those of error; and let us, with that view, give all possible encouragement to a Society, which is instituted for the very purpose of furnishing us with a constant supply of the best helps towards counteracting the pernicious designs of those who "set themselves against us;" who make use of every artifice to deprive us of all religion, or to introduce a corrupt one.

Inconsiderable and trivial as the little treatises dispersed by the Society may seem, yet it is by the repeated efforts of such small instruments as these, that the greatest effects are often produced. Their numbers, their plainness, and their cheapness, will give them a force and efficacy, and extent of circulation, which much more voluminous and more laboured compositions may not be able to acquire; just as we see that the lowest and humblest, and most numerous bodies of men, not the opulent and splen-

did few are those that constitute the real strength and wealth of the community.

It has been frequently asserted, that it is PHILOSOPHY, MODERN PHILOSOPHY, which has enlightened and improved mankind. But whom has it enlightened and improved? A small knot, perhaps, of wits and philosophers, and learned men; but how have *the multitude*, the bulk of the people, those who really constitute *the world*, been enlightened and improved? Do *they* read the works of Bolingbroke, of D'Alembert, of Hume, or of Raynal? Thanks be to God those elaborate and bulky compositions are equally beyond their understandings to comprehend, their leisure to peruse, and their ability to purchase. Most fortunately for mankind, the mischief of such writings is confined (comparatively speaking) to a very narrow circle, which their admirers, however, are pleased to dignify with the name of *the world*. The vulgar, the vile populace; so far are those great philosophers from desiring to instruct and reform, that they

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think them *utterly unworthy of a reasonable religion*. This the most eminent of their fraternity has declared in exprefs terms *. On the other hand, the Author of *our religion* declares, that he came TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. Here then you fee opposed to each other the spirit of CHRISTIANITY and the spirit of PHILOSOPHY. Judge ye, for yourselves, which is most worthy of God and beneficial to man, and make your choice accordingly. If you take PHILOSOPHY for your guide, you will despise the humble employment of diffusing religious knowledge among the common people; but if you chuse CHRIST for your master, you will give a proof of it this day, by patronizing a Society that forms

* Mr. Voltaire speaking of certain superstitious sects in China, has these very remarkable words: *Ces sectes sont tolerees á la Chine pour l'usage du Vulgaire, comme des alimens grossiers faits pour le nourrir; tandis que les magistrats & les lettrés, séparés en tout du peuple, se nourrissent d'une substance plus pure. Il semble en effet que la populace ne merite pas une religion raisonnable.*

Essai sur l'Histoire Generale, Tom. i. p. 33, 34.

itself

itself on *his* model, and professes to carry on the great work of reformation which *He* begun, in the very way which he pointed out, BY PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR.

T H E E N D.

A
S E R M O N

Preached in the CATHEDRAL CHURCH of
ST. PAUL, LONDON:
On THURSDAY, JUNE the 12th, 1783.

BEING THE TIME
Of the YEARLY MEETING of the
CHILDREN Educated in the CHARITY-
SCHOOLS, in and about the Cities of LONDON
and WESTMINSTER.

By the Reverend GEORGE HORNE, D. D.
Dean of CANTERBURY, and President of St. MARY MAGDALEN
COLLEGE, OXFORD.

Published at the Request of the SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE,
And the TRUSTEES of the several SCHOOLS.

To which is annexed,
AN ACCOUNT OF THE
SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

L O N D O N :

Printed by JOHN RIVINGTON, JUN. PRINTER TO THE
SAID SOCIETY, in ST. JOHN'S-SQUARE;

And sold by JOHN, FRANCIS, and CHARLES RIVINGTON,
BOOKSELLERS, at (N^o 62,) the BIBLE and CROWN, in
ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.

MDCCCLXXXIII.

2 T H E S S. III. 13.

BE NOT WEARY IN WELL DOING.

THE honour of being thus called to plead the cause of a SOCIETY, whose reputation must run coeval with that of religion and virtue, is somewhat qualified by the consideration, that the subject has been already treated by so many persons of superior eminence and ability. The motives that have place in compositions of other kinds, can have none here; since in vain would it be for the preacher to hope, that he shall be able either to invent new matter, or polish the old into new beauty and lustre.

Discouraging, however, as this reflection may at first sight appear, it affords no solid reason why
such

such anniversaries should be discontinued or slighted. Successive generations of men require successive information; and the same men, though they may want to be *informed* but once, may want often to be *reminded*. Good impressions, we know, are impaired in much less time than that of a year, by the cares and pleasures of life, and need therefore to be frequently retouched. Many hear with more effect than they read: many also may hear, who do not read at all: and of those who do read, numbers may read a new sermon, who never read the old (though “the old be better;”) and by coming into new hands, it may procure us new friends and allies. Fresh hints, and those of consequence, may be afforded by the occurrences and publications of the times. Fresh accounts are communicated of the progress made, to encourage the desponding; or of the farther supplies requisite, to give the opulent and generous an opportunity of furnishing them.

It is matter of general complaint, that the fervor and zeal which, at the commencement of a

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charitable institution, diffused warmth and splendor on all around, are but too apt, by degrees, to languish and die away, unless some expedient be employed periodically to revive and cherish the holy flame. Let me congratulate the Society on the additional circumstances of solemnity, devised, with equal benevolence and taste, to grace their anniversary, in the place where we are now assembled. The eyes and ears of all present will attest the propriety with which they have been adapted to answer the purpose in view.

And respecting that part of the entertainment to be provided by the preacher, it is but doing justice to the subject to say, that though in itself old, and "what we have heard from the beginning," to the well-disposed mind it is ever new. No man is the less pleased to receive a visit from a much-loved friend, on the account of his having received many before. No man nauseates the meal of to-day, because one composed of the like salutary viands was served up to him a year ago. Should he do so, we well know where the fault must lie; not

not in the quality of the meat, but in the appetite of the eater.

To prevent any thing of the kind from taking place, let us strengthen and encourage one another by applying, as we may with great propriety do, the exhortation of the Apostle to those who are engaged in forwarding the designs of the Society. Let us endeavour to shew, that all such are engaged in *well-doing*, and therefore, that they ought not to be *weary*.

Manifold, in the present state of the world, are the wants of mankind; and the virtues of one part of the species consist much in relieving the necessities of the other. It is the leading feature in *his* character, on whom angelic as well as human spirits are directed to fix their attention, that “He went about, doing good;” in other words, as the explanation immediately follows, “healing all * Acts x. 38. “that were oppressed of the devil *,” and afflicted with the maladies and calamities introduced into the world by sin, of which that evil spirit was the author. An idea of a similar nature is always supposed to be

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conveyed, when we say of any person departed, that "he did much good in his life-time." Nay, to the great Governor of the Universe, we have no other way of giving the glory due, than by proclaiming, as we are enjoined to do, that "Jehovah is good, and that his tender mercies are over all his works *." Godlike are the labours of *Pf. cxlv. 9. Charity; and they, who are employed in them, are, without all doubt, employed in *well-doing*.

The external indigence of our fellow-creatures, as it strikes directly upon our senses, is apt to be first and principally noticed. The case of a brother or a sister, destitute of food and raiment, of habitation, health, and comfort, calls upon us, for commiseration and assistance, in a voice scarcely to be resisted by the *man*, much less by the *Christian*. And to the praise of our age and nation be it spoken, no pains are spared to relieve all such objects of bodily distress.

But the plan of the Society extends farther, and penetrates deeper into the constitution of human nature. It enters the cottage of clay, and reaches

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the inhabitant contained within, the immortal guest doomed for a while to sojourn here below ; succouring the infirmities and necessities, to which, during such its temporary abode upon earth, the soul of man is become subject. For there is an inward and spiritual, as well as an outward and visible poverty ; and that we may conceive proper ideas of the former, the sacred writers have described it under figures and images borrowed from the latter. There is a species of food necessary for the support of the mind, after which it is said to “ hunger and thirst.” There are garments, with which the spirits of just men appear clothed : and there is a state of the soul, which, through all its powers and faculties, is a state of health and salvation. Nothing of a corporeal kind was certainly intended in that reproof given by the Spirit to the church of Laodicea—“ Thou sayest I am rich, “ and increased in goods, and have need of nothing ; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and
 * Rev. iii. 17. “ naked *.” An attention to this intellectual distress and misery, and the proper methods of relieving them, is excellent in proportion to the value

of the subject, and the more dangerous consequences of their being neglected; and therefore constitutes the sublimer part of Charity. When Christ healed bodily diseases, he did it principally that he might manifest his ability to heal those that are spiritual.—“ That ye may know the Son of Man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy) Arise, take up thy bed, and go to thine house *.” With particular disorders of the bodily frame some are afflicted, and some are not: and they whom our Lord healed of one, yet died afterwards of another. The saying in which *all* men are interested, and which ought therefore “ of all men to be received,” is, “ that Jesus Christ came into the world to SAVE SIN-
* Matt. ix. 6.
† 1 Thess. i. 10.
 NERS †.”

But surely in vain did he come, unless the *knowledge* of this salvation be conveyed to those whom it concerns. This knowledge is not born with us, nor are we to expect it by inspiration from above. Heaven has revealed it once, but left it from thenceforth to be communicated by man to man. He whose lamp has been kindled, is enjoined to kindle

those of his descendants, that so the Gospel may run and be glorified, to the end of time. This indeed has been the process ordained from the beginning: for of the patriarchal religion, derived from Adam by tradition, may that be said, which the Psalmist hath said of the same religion in sum and substance, as it was republished in writing by Moses. “ God established a testimony, he appointed a law, which he commanded our fathers that they should make known to their children, that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children; that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his

* Ps. lxxviii. “ commandments *,”
5, 6, 7.

Through the degeneracy and apostasy of nations, losing the knowledge originally imparted to their ancestors, it will sometimes happen, that parents can no longer instruct their progeny, or educate them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, in which they themselves perhaps have not been educated. Ignorance, instead of knowledge, is

then transmitted from generation to generation, of which each grows worse than the preceding; till, at length, “darkness covers the land, and gross
 “darkness the inhabitants thereof* ;” a darkness * *Isai. lx. 2.*
 that may indeed be *felt*, and that ought to be bewailed, as it is a sure forerunner of ruin and extinction.—“My people are destroyed for lack of know-
 “lege: because thou hast rejected knowlege, I will
 “also reject thee; seeing thou hast forgotten the
 “law of thy God, I will also forget thy children †.” † *Hos. iv. 6.*

But suppose this not altogether the case. It is among the evils of external poverty, and one of the greatest of those evils, to be the cause of that other poverty, which is internal. The poor, unless care be taken of them in this respect by the rich, are by that very circumstance often deprived of the means of knowlege. Much of their time is of necessity otherwise employed; and when they enjoy any little intervals of leisure, opportunities and instructors are wanting.

It may be said, perhaps, “What occasion have
 “the poor for knowlege?” For knowlege of many
 kinds,

kinds, none at all: they are better without it: ignorance for them is preferable. But there is an ignorance—that above-mentioned—which is attended with effects very prejudicial to the welfare of society in this world, and that of individuals in the next—productive of vice and ill manners, of confusion, and every evil work. Good may be known, without being practised; but it cannot be practised, if it be not known.

“ If we enquire”—says a late writer, in his admirable treatise on the subject of the *Poor*—“ If we
“ enquire into the state of those countries, where
“ the people are grossly ignorant, we shall find the
“ most unhappy consequences arising from their
“ deplorable situation. The savages in America
“ are but in a small degree raised above the irrational tribes; the populace in Portugal, whose
“ whole knowledge consists in a credulous superstition, are now the most cruel and barbarous people in Europe; and the lower class in London,
“ who are in general very ignorant, are ripe for
“ every crime. Had the same degree of knowledge, of which some complain as improper for the
“ commonalty,

“ commonalty, been imparted to them, there is
 “ reason to believe it would have civilized their
 “ manners, and corrected their morals. Some of
 “ our late eloquent and judicious historians have
 “ set in a very striking view the barbarity and mi-
 “ sery of the middle ages, arising almost wholly
 “ from the ignorance which then overspread Eu-
 “ rope.

“ Wherever gross ignorance prevails, there either
 “ gross vices or absolute stupidity will abound. It
 “ is by a school education chiefly that we receive
 “ the rudiments of knowledge. Though men may
 “ be, and it is hoped are improved by public dis-
 “ courses, yet, unless they have received some pre-
 “ vious instruction, they can reap but little benefit
 “ from them. It appears then to be an object of
 “ great importance to the public, as well as to in-
 “ dividuals, that the meanest of the people should
 “ be taught to read, and be instructed in the duties
 “ of religion and morality. This seems to be one
 “ of the most necessary steps towards the civilizing
 “ of a country; and this instruction may be given
 “ at an early period, before they are fit for labour,
 “ or

“ or at times when they are not otherwise employed *.”

There must ever be in all communities a considerable majority of poor, to perform the various labours of life. In return for their temporals, we should communicate to them of our spirituals. If they, by their labours, furnish us with “ the meat that perisheth,” it is but reasonable that we, especially as it can be done without much labour, should supply them with “ that meat which endureth for ever.” If they “ give us to drink,” we should in return present them with “ the water springing up unto eternal life.” Their spiritual necessities are the same with those of the rich; they have equally souls to be saved, and stand therefore equally in need of the knowledge requisite to save them.

This being perfectly known to the God of the spirits of all flesh, he has not been unmindful of them in the dispensations of his grace, but has adapted his Gospel to the wants of all alike.

* M'Farlan's *Inquiries concerning the Poor*, p. 246.

The evidence, on which it's authority stands, is not veiled from vulgar sight by the clouds of metaphysical subtlety; it depends not on intricate arguments, and tedious consequences, which the poor have neither leisure to study, nor ability to understand. Jesus could not have performed the miracles which he did perform, unless God had been with him; and if God were with him, then the doctrines taught by him, under the sanction of those miracles, were also of God. The Apostles believed in him, because they saw his mighty works; and we believe them when they tell us so, because they could not have deceived the world if they would, and would not have done it if they could. A little plain common sense sees all this; and more need not be seen, to induce any man to become a Christian.

As the evidence is stated, so the doctrines of salvation are taught, with a condescension to the capacities of all. To render them at the same time intelligible and agreeable, they are delivered in the pleasing form of history, and illustrated by comparisons and similitudes taken from the most fami-

liar objects in the natural world, and the concerns of ordinary life. A poor man is thus taught, in a week, more than philosophy could teach those that were most learned in it, for a series of ages: he is taught to know God, and his various dispensations to mankind: and with respect to morals, and the duties of society, he is taught—what every wise government would wish that it's citizens might all be taught.

Accordingly, we find it given as one mark of the divinity of the Gospel, and as the circumstance which discriminates it from the wisdom of the world, that it was preached by Christ and his Apostles to the poor. Not for the reasons insinuated by unbelievers, ancient and modern, that they were either afraid or ashamed to preach it to the rich and the learned; but because the former were clear from many prejudices and evil passions which adhered to the latter, and therefore were better disposed to receive it. These received it first, and had the honour to lead the way to the others, who followed after, in due time, from every rank and order of life, as they could be brought to give it a fair and impar-

tial hearing. But be it ever remembered, when this argument is under discussion, that the truth of God must finally rest upon its proper evidence, and not upon the incident of its being accepted or rejected by those to whom it is proposed. Such acceptance or rejection must afterwards be accounted for, from the different tempers, dispositions, and circumstances of mankind. And it requires but a very moderate degree of acquaintance with human nature, to assign adequate reasons, why, when the same doctrine is preached to two different persons, one should put it from him, and depart "sorrowful," while the other embraces it, and "goes on his way rejoicing."

If it be enquired, "Whether the poor be capable of making any considerable proficiency in the school of Christ?" Experience will answer in the affirmative. With a little plain instruction, they can apprehend the articles of faith as contained in the Apostles' Creed, and the rules of practice as laid down in the Commandments. They can learn to trust in God, their Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier: they can give him thanks for what they have,

and pray to him for what they want. They can love their Saviour, and for his sake shew kindness to their brethren, whom he has redeemed. One may often behold, among the lower ranks, that attention to the distresses of each other, that earnest desire, and, what is of more worth, that unwearied endeavour, to remove or alleviate them, which do credit to the human heart, wherever they are found. A poor person, after labouring through the day, will pass the night in watching with a sick neighbour; while the rich pursue their pleasures, the scholar retires to his library, and the virtuoso to his cabinet, safe from the importunity of the wretched, and where the voice of misery never penetrates. Let not the pride of wealth or science look down with contempt upon the poor, since they often possess and exhibit that charity which is the end of knowledge, the comfort of society, the balm of life; and by his proficiency in which, every man is to be tried, at the judgment of the great day.—“Hath not GOD chosen the poor?” Let not MAN, then, “despise them.”

Upon these grounds it is, that the Society has been employed, for near a century, in disseminating

Christian Knowledge among the poor. Thousands and ten thousands of children have been snatched from the jaws of ruin, from ignorance and vice, and educated in the fear of God, in the Charity-Schools originally fostered and reared, through Great-Britain and Ireland, by their parental care, and which at this time contain above forty thousand. To this part of the plan the following testimony is borne by a celebrated prelate, in a charge delivered so long ago as the year 1716, though published only a few months since. He is speaking of the great and necessary duty of *catechising*—"The
 " late encouragers of *Charity-Schools* are never
 " enough to be commended for their care and diligence on this head, by which they have deserved
 " well of God and man, and have done the church
 " of England and the pure religion of Christ excellent service; and verily they shall not fail of
 " their reward †."

A multitude of Bibles, Common-Prayer-Books, and a variety of Religious Tracts, adapted to the

† The learned and eloquent Bishop Atterbury's Charge to the Diocese of Rochester, in Mr. Nichols's publication of *The Epistolary Correspondence, &c.* Vol. II. p. 260.

capacities and spiritual exigencies of the poor, amounting, within the space of the last fifty years only, to near three millions, have been printed and distributed by the Society, not only through England and every part of Wales, the isles of Scilly, and of Man, but their care has been extended to the Greek church in Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, Arabia, and Egypt, as well as to the conversion of the Heathens in the East-Indies, where Schools and Missions have been established for that purpose. Translations of the proper books having been made, the inhabitants of these different countries have had opportunities of hearing and celebrating, “ every
“ one in his own language, the wonderful works
“ of God.”

I do not enlarge upon these several objects of the Society's bounty, because, in general, the world is now well acquainted with the nature of them ; and the particulars may be seen in the annual account of it's proceedings. That *much* good has been effected, is known to all those who have been concerned in carrying these benevolent designs into execution, or who have by any means happened to
fall

fall within the reach of their influence ; but *how* much, it never will, nor can be known, till manifested by that day, which shall manifest all things. The diligence of the husbandman, with the quantity and quality of the seed sown, will then best appear, when the harvest shall crown his toil, and “ the valleys stand so thick with corn, that they “ shall laugh and sing.”

Thus engaged in *well-doing*, be not ye, therefore, *weary* ; “ for in due time ye shall reap, if ye faint “ not.” Look back with joy and pleasure on what *has* been done ; look forward with hope and confidence on what *may* be done. The adversary is not weary of exerting his endeavours to suppress and extinguish the religious spirit among us ; be not ye weary of exerting yours (as they always have been exerted) to cherish and support it. Consider the prospect which presented itself to the first preachers of the Gospel, when they entered upon the task of *promoting Christian Knowledge* ; and consider the event : remember the *mustard-seed*, and view the *tree* which it has produced. Ye are fellow-labourers with them ; and according to the measures of his grace, and the course

course of his dispensations, Christ will be with *you*, as he was with them. Apostolical is your work, and suitable will be your reward. Go on, then, and prosper, in the name of the Lord; looking forward to that triumphant hour, when the scene shall open, of which that now before us may serve to convey some faint resemblance; when the innumerable company of those rescued by your charity from the hands of the destroyer, and numbered among the children of God, shall be seen clothed in the robes of righteousness and salvation, arranged in shining circles around the throne, and heard singing Glory to their Redeemer, who sitteth thereon, for ever and ever.

F I N I S.

A
S E R M O N

Preached in the CATHEDRAL CHURCH of
ST. PAUL, LONDON:
On THURSDAY, JUNE the 10th, 1784.

BEING THE TIME
Of the YEARLY MEETING of the
CHILDREN Educated in the CHARITY-
SCHOOLS, in and about the Cities of LONDON
and WESTMINSTER.

By the Rev. WILLIAM VINCENT, D.D.
SUB-ALMONER to HIS MAJESTY.

Published at the Request of the SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE,
And the TRUSTEES of the several SCHOOLS.

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ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.

MDCCLXXXIV.

M A T T. XXVIII. 19, 20.

GO YE AND TEACH ALL NATIONS—AND LO, I AM
WITH YOU ALWAYS EVEN UNTO THE END OF
THE WORLD.

THIS promise of our Blessed Lord is upon us at this moment ;—assembled as we are to execute the command, we are undoubtedly objects of the blessing. The command is universal, the promise is perpetual ; and as far as we are engaged in the performance of the one, without any regard to worldly motives, we are entitled to the reward of the other, in as full a sense as it was enjoyed by the Apostles themselves.

Cheering and delightful as is the prospect presented to us by the assemblage of so many thousand infant christians, it is but one part of the enlarged scheme conceived by the Society which commands my services upon the solemnity of this day ; a

scheme which it is my duty to unfold, and to which, with the divine assistance, I wish to conciliate the protection and approbation of every serious member of the Church of England.

The advancement of our holy religion, naturally coincides with the three distinct views of the Society.

I. To convert unbelievers :

II. To strengthen the faith of believers :

III. And to raise a stock of such as may believe hereafter,

are services perfectly agreeing with the commands of Christ, and intitling those who perform them to every blessing of his dispensation.

I. Under the first of these heads, the conversion of unbelievers, it is to be lamented, that the Society has nothing flattering to present us with. A weak and ineffectual mission is still preserved in India ; that it is maintained at all, is owing to the spirit of perseverance in supporting a good cause,—that it languishes, is owing to the total insufficiency of means to prosecute it with vigour ;—but
added

added to this, there is a general languor spread over this business, arising from the common failure of all these attempts; a cause which checks the energy of these Societies all over Europe; which has made the clergy less vigorous in their efforts, and the people less liberal in their contributions.

And although, in this general aversion to the work, it is not to be presumed that the following representations will have much effect in changing the opinions of mankind, still it may be permitted to an individual (who will never have another opportunity) to deliver an opinion upon the subject, and to declare, that he is convinced that former failures are no argument for abandoning the design.

1. To enter at large into the cause of these failures is a subject for history; to mark the general outline is sufficient for the present purpose. The Romish missionaries wanted neither wisdom, nor piety, nor zeal for this great work; and they possessed one advantage above all others engaged in the service, I mean that ready obedience to the command of their superiors, which (if we should with

too great want of charity deny the agency of nobler motives) was, of itself, sufficient to account for the rapid progress they at one time made.

It would be injurious to deny them the merit of patience, fortitude, indefatigable labour, contempt of danger, endurance of poverty, persecution, and martyrdom itself. In all these points they are examples for the imitation of all those who may engage in this arduous service: but there was one general error that misled them, an error they could not have fallen into if they had looked to the conduct of the Apostles, and which, at last, was the cause of their ejection from every country they had entered.—This was, their application to the princes rather than the people; and in whatever future age this great work shall be attempted again, unless this primary error shall be avoided, the event will be the same.

In the empires of the East, the principal theatre on which the Missionaries exhibited their talents, the religion of the Sovereign is in general fixed on

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no certain principle; and in that age, when no rooted prejudices could have been conceived against the Christian Faith, if they had only passively allowed the progress of the Missionaries in the conversion of their subjects, their own accession to the Faith would have followed as regularly, and from the same cause, as at first took place in the Roman Empire: but this would have been a work of slow and imperceptible progress,—a work no Missionary could have lived to see the issue of; and therefore, not only captivated by the splendour of the royal name, but concluding falsely, that the conversion of the Prince comprehended that of the people, their whole efforts were pointed to this single object. The consequence was what it naturally ought to be, they became involved in all the finess of court intrigues,—the protection of the Prince continued no longer than his own whim or passion directed him,—and the moment this changed, there was a party ready formed to effect the ruin of the cause.

This is a general portrait of the failure of this undertaking in the hands of the Romish Mission-

aries; and, if this account be true, it leaves open a prospect of success for future attempts, if ever it should be possible to revive a spirit for resuming them.

2. The reasonableness of renewing our endeavours is founded upon the highest motives,—for in the first place it is a positive command of Christ. *Go ye and teach all nations*, is a precept not confined to the Apostles alone;—till all nations shall have been taught, it is equally binding upon every Christian, let him exist in any age whatsoever: and though perhaps at this hour it is not a duty, or if a duty, in the present state of Christianity not probable, that every man who is a Christian should leave his home and occupation; to undertake the conversion of the heathen world,—still it is certainly the duty of the Clergy to keep the design on foot, to remove the prejudices against it, to profit by past errors, to correct old plans, or form new ones; and whenever they appear earnest in the work, they may depend upon the countenance, the protection, the contributions of the Laity: and whether

whether they hope for success or no, the duty is indispensable, the command is absolute.

But a second consideration is, that the cause is not hopeless ;—throughout the whole world those who are not against us, are with us : that is, where there is no hatred against the Christian name,—no prejudices arising from former intercourse, the plain and simple doctrines of the Gospel are easily received by the uncorrupted mind. This observation will readily suggest the strong distinction between Mahometan and idolatrous nations. The unity of the Godhead is a truth congenial to the mind ;—the attachment to numerous deities is weak and inefficient ;—the belief of the former is ever boldly asserted, and readily professed,—the latter is ever denied by the sensible part even of the idolatrous nations themselves. It is the consciousness of this sentiment that forms the bold profession, the assumed superiority, the haughty faith of the Mahometans ;—it is the weakness and absurdity of Idolatry that has drawn so many of the idolatrous nations to the Mahometan faith, — nations equally open to the truths of the Gospel, if they had been simply

simply proposed,—and as many of them as are not become Mahometan, are equally open at this hour.

These considerations ought to point out the objects to which the future attempts of civilization and advancing Christianity ought to be directed. Of all the idolatrous nations in the world, there are but two shut against us;—to all the others, whether in the Eastern or Western world, or the unexplored regions of Africa and the Southern Hemisphere, we have still free access,—or at least trials might be made of the difficulties to be encountered:

In all these nations, the indifference of the Sovereigns to religious concerns, the bad morals and loose principles of the Great, are in favour of Christianity; for if the application is first made, where it ever ought to be, to the people, and the people are once taught to become better subjects, better citizens, and better men, the superior orders proceed from approbation to protection, and at last possibly to participate themselves of what they approve in others.

This

This is no idle theory, but supported by the example of events which took place in the Roman Empire. It is true, that our holy religion was planted in that Empire by the Apostles themselves; what follows then? but that as their success is an incitement to us, their practice ought to be our rule of conduct.

To effect this glorious work, new systems must be formed at home,—the old abandoned as unequal to the task; and though it would be arrogance to suppose any individual capable of proposing an adequate design, still the contemplation is pleasing, and the supposition of its possibility meritorious. We may indulge in the idea of a seminary formed for this purpose, in either or both Universities, (for unless the minds of men intended for this profession, and the common habits of education are changed, success is almost impossible) we may suppose these seminaries endowed with funds to take the whole charge and maintenance of those admitted upon themselves; we may add, that none should be admitted but such as voluntarily offered, and voluntarily professed their readiness to take upon them a

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life

life of obedience and poverty ; that in these seminaries no languages should be taught, but such as should be useful in the Missions, and in divinity itself nothing critical or polemical : but, above all, that every one should be qualified with an art or profession to support himself.

Visionary as this scheme may appear, the most visionary part of it, the fund to support it, exists at least in one, if not both the Universities ; funds, which if the public voice called for them, would be easily applied,—or if there were no such fund, there wants nothing more at any time in this country, than a general persuasion of real utility, to create one.

But by any means if it can be supposed possible for such a seminary to be formed at home, the whole difficulty of foreign Missions, which has ever oppressed all these attempts, ceases at once. The Missionaries would create no expence but for their transport, every thing else must be left to the divine protection and themselves : For under this scheme men would not be sent to reside in an European

ropean colony or settlement,—they would live among idolaters,—they would support themselves,—they would propose their doctrines by slow and gradual means, and wherever they could once collect a church, they must be authorized to constitute Elders and Ministers from among the natives. They would prescribe no forms, but those of decency; assume no superiority, claim no rank, but what was purely spiritual; and as soon as a church could be formed, they would extend their views by means of native Missionaries.

It was by this practice that twelve Apostles sufficed for the conversion of the Roman world;—it was by these means that labourers were found equal to the harvest; and if another harvest is ever to be expected, nothing but a strict adherence to apostolic institutions can enable us to reap it.

3. The mode of publishing the doctrines of the Gospel is so plainly prescribed in scripture, that it is impossible to add any thing to what is there delivered, or to detract from it. The opposition to be expected to these doctrines is no other than the

Apostles encountered and subdued; and if the difficulty is not insurmountable, the same encouragement is held out to us as to them;—we have the same truths on our side, the same God to protect us, the same Holy Ghost to comfort us, the same promise of Christ to animate us; for he is with us always, even unto the end of the world.

But the difficulty is not so great as it is sometimes represented. All the accounts of the Romish Missionaries, the Danish, and our own agree, that the idolaters readily admit the superiority of our doctrines, though they decline embracing them from worldly motives.—They are none of them without religion, none of them Atheists, for atheism is the product of fanciful refinement and speculation, not of barbarism; and if men have a religion which they own inferior, but still adhere to from habit, practice, or fear of disgrace,—among such nations, though the cross of Christ would at first appear ignominy, the accession of every single convert is a step gained towards removing these impressions; and when a number is collected into a church, this ignominy becomes their glory.

If

If an apology is necessary for having entered into this discussion, the present state of the Society will afford one; out of the two foreign Missions they supported, one is annihilated by the event of a fatal war; and the other is in such a state, that in a few years it must either be abandoned, or some new mode of conducting it adopted. I speak not this to discredit the labours of those pious Missionaries employed at present in India, or to discourage their endeavours;—we have reason to think they have done all that their situation will admit: but it is impossible for them, on the present plan, to act effectually; or for the Society, out of its present resources, to enlarge that plan; but if any thing new should be attempted, what has been here said, should it be of no use, will stand upon their records as the opinion of a member, who is sincerely interested in their success, and strongly attached to every part of the labours they are engaged in.

II. But we now proceed to the consideration of a design far more effectual and successful;—the second object of the Society is the distribution of religious,

ligious tracts ; and a review of this design will suggest some reflections, which, amidst all the complaints of the looseness of the times, will furnish matter of triumph to the Christian cause.

It is no small satisfaction to consider, that the opportunity of obtaining books at the price established by the Society, is one of the chief inducements which attracts serious Christians to become subscribers to the undertaking. Exclusive of the good which may be supposed to result from the distribution, here is, in the first instance, a proof, that in an age taxed with irreligion and infidelity, there is still a very large body of citizens, who have not only strong Christian principles themselves, but who wish to extend the influence of Christianity throughout the whole mass of the people.

That the Clergy should engage in this service is not extraordinary, it is only a part of their duty ;— a secondary mode of extending those instructions, which either their public or private admonitions cannot complete ; but the respectable numbers of the Laity added to the list, is on the one hand an honour

nour to the Established Church, and, on the other, an indication of virtue in themselves: They by this act become teachers of the Gospel, not only acceptable to God for the goodness of their own lives, but the good they have caused in others, and possibly for the rescue of many from ignorance and perdition.

In pursuing this reflection, and considering the possible good that may be effected by these means, among the inferior orders of the people, who are the objects of this distribution, the effect is not easy to be calculated. Who can tell how many ignorant have been informed? how many wicked reclaimed? how many sordid roused? by an annual dispersion of more than seventy thousand tracts, many of them composed by the ablest Divines that ever adorned a church, in the simplest and most unaffected spirit of practical religion? That good is done, every one of the Clergy who hear me this day can testify. We see men induced to assemble at public worship, to attend the sacrament, to become decent, nay fervent in their devotion, by these means; and we have reason to believe, that the admonitions

monitions thus conveyed penetrate into private life, and render many, better Fathers, Masters, Husbands, better Men, and better Citizens.

But if the progress of this is silent and imperceptible, it is so much the more conformable to the spirit of our religion. Christianity is the leaven hid in a measure of meal, the grain of mustard-seed, the treasure hidden and to be searched for;—its progress, if genuine, is always quiet and temperate;—great effects display the vanity of the teachers, splendor corrupts it;—sudden success and superiority give an accession of worldly power, but hasten its decline. At its first propagation it was unnoticed, nor was it till after the growth of a century, that the Roman Historians knew sufficient to speak of it with any degree of accuracy.

This may be a lesson to us all, to wait in patience for the harvest,—to suffer it to ripen gradually,—to discharge our duty temperately, never complaining of our ill success, or imputing the good to ourselves. The part we have to act is a plain duty not to be declined, the issue is in the disposal of God,
and

and he will direct it according to the laws of unerring wisdom.

Another lesson the Ministers of the Gospel may deduce, is, not to repine at the opposition of the world.—The Church of Christ has, in different ages, combated every different species of attack, and risen superior to them all; persecution from the civil powers, calumny from professed foes, treachery from insidious friends, and divisions from within. Notwithstanding all these, the Church still exists, and, if we trust the promise of our Saviour, it shall exist till the consummation of all things,—till every knee shall bow to the name of Jesus,—till the Son shall deliver up his power to the Father, and God shall be all in all.

The hostility we have now to encounter, is the same that has been combated before, and conquered. The world, with all its pomps and vanities, is a constant enemy; and of this we have no more reason to complain than any other age; but there is added to this a sceptical philosophy, which, though not new, has been revived with an extraordinary de-

gree of malignity, and been professed with an air of unusual exultation.

It is true, this evil is not of native growth; the philosophy of our own country has been sound and genuine; we triumph in the faith of Bacon, Newton, Boyle, Locke, Addison, and many living names, whose belief appears as firm as their philosophy is solid; but it is a philosophy derived from the French school, founded in speculative and abstract reasoning; capable, it is true, of dazzling and confounding, but proving nothing; destroying all the fixed principles of Religion and Reason, but proposing nothing in their place; undermining Revelation, building Virtue on Convenience, and forming the metaphysical deductions of individuals, into a rule for the unerring wisdom of the Creator:

The effect of these doctrines relates chiefly to the higher orders of society, to those who call themselves reading or thinking men, and affects the lower orders chiefly, as they may be corrupted by the example of their superiors.

But, to my reverend brethren of the Clergy I may say, that bold and assuming as the present tone of Philosophy may appear, we have no reason to be alarmed at it; we have truth and the word of God to support us in the combat; and we have the example of past ages to teach us, that it is no more than one out of a thousand modes of opposition which the Church has survived; that this will sink like the rest, in the revolution of human opinions, while the religion of Christ shall flourish immutable and eternal.

The sentiments of men have varied with the fashion of the times. The divisions among Christians, the attacks of professed adversaries, have changed in various ages; old opinions have been forgotten, or revived under a new form, new ones have started up. Previous to the bold impiety of Arius, there were no less than forty-four different heresies, the names of which are only recorded; their principles are almost unknown, or known only by the answers of their opponents; and if this affords an experience we can confide in, we may trust that our holy religion shall be as triumphant in the present contest, as in any period past.

The principles of the rich and powerful are nearly allied throughout the world ; prosperity sets them above common opinions ; ease and affluence produce in one part of them loose morals and corrupt habits, in the other a vain and speculative curiosity.—There is a food peculiar to this turn of mind, which Philosophers know perfectly how to administer, and in the dealing out of which they find their account in the sale of their productions, the protection they conciliate, or the consequence derived from them : in this sense the children of this world are wiser than the children of light.

Upon this occasion *our* duty is very plain ; such of the Clergy as have superior learning, ability, patience, and leisure, are called upon to maintain the faith with fortitude and courage, to oppose argument, to detect fallacy, to reclaim error, to carry home their application to the rich and powerful, but neither to fear their contempt, nor court their passions. To the remainder of us an humbler duty is allotted, but far more pleasant, and indeed more useful ; I mean, a conscientious discharge of our parochial duty, a vigilance over our respective congregations,

gregations, an application to the body of the people, a searching out of the weak to confound the strong, and of the foolish to reprove the wise. In the performance of this, there are no means more apt than those marked out and recommended by the rules of the Society,—no adventitious assistance more proper to be added to our own labours, than the tracts distributed under their direction.

III. The peculiar duty of the day forbids these considerations to be farther extended. The third view of the Society, comprehending the protection of the Charity Schools, presents us with an object of the highest importance. It is true, they owe not their origin to this Society, but they are indebted to it for a general plan of conduct, for an unity of system, for a defence of their utility, for an over-ruling care and sollicitous attention, which has maintained and preserved them ; which has instituted the solemnity of this day, as an annual and continual recommendation of them to the public.

The assembly of these children collected before us, exhibits no worldly pomp, no display of magnificence,

cence, no parade of ecclesiastical power, but a spectacle truly christian ; it must be an heart shut to all the feelings of sympathy and compassion, that can view it without emotion, or reflect on it without an admiration of the designers, patrons, and protectors.

That the children of the poor should be brought up as christians, is a religious concern ; yet if there be a single person present, who is not a christian, I appeal to him as a moral man, and a member of society, whether decency, cleanliness, order, and regularity, are not, in this rank of life, virtues. But the objections raised against these institutions it is by no means necessary to answer, they have many of them been silenced by the progressive evidence of the utility arising from these designs ; many have been refuted by my predecessors in this office ; but thus far we may say, that no objection can lie against the education of the poor, which may not equally be urged against the instruction of the higher ranks ; and no argument can be advanced against the extension of learning in the lowest orders, which, two centuries ago, the Roman Catholics could not have main-

maintained against the information of the body of the people.

But abandoning disputation, we may employ our time much more usefully in contemplating the progress of this work, and in tracing out the means of enlarging and completing it.

It is the glory of Christianity, that in whatever country it has been planted, the condition of the poor has been bettered. To remove poverty is impossible; to alleviate it is a duty indispensable. Hospitals for the sick, asylums for the aged and infirm, nurseries for the young and helpless, are institutions almost unknown to the boasted legislation of Greece and Rome; they exist not at this day in idolatrous nations, and have been adopted by the Mahometans, only because their religion was derived from christian sources.

But if Christianity has produced this system, the purity of Protestant principles has completed it. In this metropolis only, there are more than fifty thousand persons annually received for the cure of
bodily

bodily diseases; the numbers maintained or aided by alms-houses, colleges, and other foundations, are probably nearly equal, and the inferior modes of relief are beyond calculation. The royal hospitals immediately under the inspection of the incorporate citizens, are worthy of the first city of Europe;—they do honour to those virtuous men who first obtained the funds from the crown; it was their firmness and integrity which rescued these funds from the nurturing of Monkish indolence, and the grasp of avaricious plunderers; it was their wisdom which applied them to the best of all purposes, the restoration of the industrious to their labour, and the protection of infant innocence.

I mention these, because the foundation of Christ's Hospital is the pattern and example for every thing that has been attempted for the instruction of the poor; and although the generality of these institutions fall as far short of the extensive designs, as of the funds of their original, the utility of them is equally evident, and the plan, by being less expensive, is more largely diffused.

There

There are some, though but very few of the parish-schools, where the children are maintained as well as educated ; in one sense we may justly give a preference to these, as they approach nearer to their pattern, and as they secure the children from the danger of ill example ; but we are not to do this at the expence of the others ; we are to depreciate no part of the general scheme ; we are to be thankful to those benefactors who extend the influence of it, in any line ; we are to cherish it as far as it goes ; and, if it is impossible to find funds to carry it further, we may well rejoice in the application of those which are raised.

Instead of complaining at the narrowness of these inferior designs, it has been suggested, that it would be well if an addition could be grafted on them, in which, by lessening the expence upon each individual, it might be possible to comprehend a greater number ; that is, if supernumeraries could be admitted into these schools, who should be taught only, and not clothed ; in which case an addition to the fixed salary of the master, or a proportionable allowance for each child, would be the whole augmentation

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mentation of expence ; and by this method, it is conceived, that every parent who would accept it, might obtain the benefits of this education for his children.

But not to insist upon parts, it is the whole of this benevolent and extensive scheme which demands our admiration ; one part may be better than another, but the whole is good ;—it is a national good, a national honour. The system of the capital has been imitated by the remotest parts of the kingdom. There are upwards of thirty thousand children instructed which come within the notice of the Society ; there are many of which the Society has no account, and many which our dissenting brethren educate in imitation of this plan, which come not under our inspection. The assembly here to-day, numerous as it is, furnishes by no means a fair estimate of the numbers even of the metropolis ; many of the schools never have attended this meeting ; and the children of Christ's Hospital, who alone amount to twelve hundred, have always been withheld, as belonging to a distinct foundation, and not pertaining to this humbler institution.

But

But from what we see, we have enough to judge and to approve; it is a spectacle worthy of the purest christian church on earth; it is one of our good works which we wish to shine before men, in which we do not exhibit ourselves, but the fruits of our faith; in which we shew the world how the hungry are fed, the naked clothed, and the poor have the Gospel preached unto them.

What effects the truths of the Gospel may have on their future lives, we pretend not to calculate; but if religious impressions are in any case necessary in early life, they are certainly more necessary for the poor than others, because if they have them not, they have none of those other restraints upon them which men of higher rank submit to from a sense of decency and propriety. It is for this reason, that the Society is so earnest in its instructions on this head, and renews them continually in its annual publications. And here, perhaps, it may be permitted to one, who has had long experience in the duty of education, to suggest to the instructors of these children, that religion is not taught by book: they may read the Bible, and repeat the

Catechism, and learn the Exposition of it, and still understand but little of them ; it is by conversation only they can be effectually instructed. I say by conversation ; because if instruction is attempted in the form of lectures, or any authoritative style whatever, they will understand as little of it, as of what they read ; but if we can lay aside these, and descend to the level of their ideas, they are perfectly capable of the strongest impressions ; not indeed of rational and complete religion, but of receiving those seeds which will produce it.

True it is, that the imbecillity of childhood is an obstacle to the admission of religious truths ; their sufferings are such as never make them have recourse to God as a refuge ; their happiness such as never makes them look up to God as the author of it ; but still such impressions as can be made, are firmer in the mind than any which can be afterwards acquired ; and this is a truth which every one who is arrived at manhood can attest.

Lastly, I would address myself to the Children themselves, if it were possible to make them comprehend ;

prehend; but if any of their parents are present, let it be a lesson for them to teach their families, that poverty, though a burden, is not misery;—that the very lowest enjoy many blessings in society, which they could not enjoy without it;—that it is not an humble lot which makes any man wretched, but idleness, vice, debauchery, profligacy, and disregard of moral and religious obligations;—that though in many countries those of their rank would be oppressed or debased by slavery, in this they are a favoured part of the community, a great object of the laws, and considered as a great portion of the public good. Their station is to be borne like every other station, because God has placed them in it; but that in this country every accident to which they are exposed by their condition, or the common lot of mortality, is provided against by the liberal spirit of the community; disease and sickness are relieved, old age is comforted;—that no sudden or general calamity can befall them, which there are not thousands of hands ready to remove; and that there are very few of them compelled to take refuge in the final support provided them by law, but such as have, by the conduct of their

their lives, excluded themselves from the better modes established for their relief.

Nothing remains, but to pray the supreme Disposer of all events for his protection in these our undertakings; and whether they are directed by the calls of natural regard to those of our own country, or by the christian spirit of universal benevolence to those who are at the extremities of the earth, may Almighty God so govern and direct them, that they may conduce to the glory of his holy name, and the benefit of all mankind.

F I N I S.

A
S E R M O N

Preached in the CATHEDRAL CHURCH of

ST. PAUL, LONDON:

On THURSDAY, MAY the 26th, 1785.

BEING THE TIME

Of the YEARLY MEETING of the
CHILDREN Educated in the CHARITY-
SCHOOLS, in and about the Cities of LONDON
and WESTMINSTER.

By the Honourable and Right Reverend Father in God

JAMES, LORD BISHOP OF ELY.

Published at the Request of the SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE,

And the TRUSTEES of the several SCHOOLS.

To which is annexed,

AN ACCOUNT OF THE

SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

L O N D O N :

Printed by ANN RIVINGTON, PRINTER TO THE SAID
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MDCCCLXXXV.

LUKE XIII. 18, 19.

THEN SAID HE, UNTO WHAT IS THE KINGDOM
OF GOD LIKE? AND WHEREUNTO SHALL I
RESEMBLE IT?

IT IS LIKE A GRAIN OF MUSTARD-SEED, WHICH A
MAN TOOK AND CAST INTO HIS GARDEN;
AND IT GREW, AND WAXED A GREAT TREE;
AND THE FOWLS OF THE AIR LODGED IN THE
BRANCHES OF IT.

THE Parable in my text is an elegant and
clear description of the gradual progress
of Christianity, from its infant state to the
period of its full growth. The analogy which it
bears to vegetation, under that view of it, requires
no explanation. The eastern clime and language
account for the allusion and the mode of speech
adopted by our Saviour. The difficulty which

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hangs

hangs over it, and which has occasionally been brought forward against such passages of holy writ, arises from the apparent contradiction the fact carries with it to the declaration which it conveys. For says the objector, if such was the case; if our christian faith, thus compared to a tender plant, which had lately shot from the grain cast into the fertile garden of Judea, was really to spread its branches to such extent, and to such beneficial purpose, how comes it, that, in so long a period as has passed since that auspicious season, it yet affords proportionably so little shelter to the fowls of heaven? Or that its branches are so few, and their vegetative powers so weak?

To say that our impatience and confined views, are no rules by which to judge of the proceedings of Providence, which embrace the utmost verge of all things, or to alledge, that the trial of our

Rom. v. 3, 4. faith, on points such as this before us, “worketh
 “patience, and patience experience, and experience
 “hope,” would be consistent with reason and revelation.

velation. But an answer may be returned in a manner less evasive of the question.

For first, a comparison, though just in it's general resemblance, need not minutely correspond in every particular. The "kingdom of heaven," or that dominion of religion over the minds of men, which is to impart such universal happiness, possesses indeed the powers of vegetation; but who knows the determinate course of seasons prescribed to give it full effect? Like grain, "it is sown a "natural body;" but as it is of greater value than the literal seed, so must it lie longer in the ground; it demands more warmth to cherish and invigorate it, and runs, in proportion, more hazard of frequent interruption and annoyance before "it can "become a spiritual body."

Secondly, The natural plant is described as proceeding in its usual course of growth, till it reaches to a perfect tree; but nothing is said of incidental checks from noxious blasts, nor of negligent and unskilful management. The same silence also is

observed on the various obstacles which oppose the progress of the “ kingdom of heaven” in minds prepossessed by evil prejudices and vicious habits. These and similar suggestions may tend to solve such doubts, and to vindicate the parable; in some degree, from reflections which seem to tarnish the lustre of the imagery, and abate our pious confidence in the prophetic character which is stamped upon it.

But thirdly, It will admit a question whether, if properly considered, the real circumstances of Christianity in general will authorize the scruple which controverts the correctness of the figure. Is it so acknowledged and melancholy a truth, that in any quarter of the globe, where the gospel had once been planted, its roots are withered, and its branches fallen off? It is certain, that in the large tract of country, where the sword and sensuality of Mahomet have forced their way, much remains of the parent stock on which his fanaticism is grafted. The Koran is principally indebted to our rule of faith and practice for any wisdom or valuable information

formation which it contains. Amidst this unpromising and barbarous desolation there yet subsists sufficient ground to keep alive our hopes, that it will one day, consistently with what we are taught to expect, recover it's former primitive dominion. From which particulars well weighed, and compared with such encouraging declarations of our Saviour, no faithful Christian can retain a doubt upon his mind that such will be the happy event.

But, if this is the real prospect presented to our view in those dreary regions, however at present beyond the reach of common observation, we have certainly less reason to hesitate on the fact in others still professing faith in the main articles of Christianity, though these are much obscured by idolatrous and impure additions. Our happy emancipation from this yoke of bondage, imposed upon us in former days, and pressed with such severity, is a comfortable preface of what may be expected amongst other nations, when liberality and science have had their perfect work. In the mean time
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A SERMON PREACHED

the original tree is firmly rooted in the ground, and the essential parts which constitute it's description, much injured as they are, do yet continue in existence, and promise hereafter to produce their proper fruit. In confirmation of these reasonable suggestions,

Fourthly, Other arguments are furnished to us from the learned labours of able scholars amongst ourselves; who, as the best tribute they could offer for the larger portion of intelligence bestowed on them by God, have devoted such talents to his honour, and the advancement of religious knowledge. From this source have flowed those copious streams, which have enriched and fertilized the “ garden into which “ this grain of mustard-seed hath been cast.” To these we are indebted for that noble work which reflects such credit upon our church, the late valuable and judicious edition of the Hebrew Scriptures. From which considerable assistance towards a more accurate translation of them must result. Hence also abound those many volumes which elucidate various passages of the New Testament, ob-
scured

scured by faulty transcripts, antiquated allusions, obsolete customs and opinions prevalent in the country and at the period of the gospel publication. All this has largely contributed to the improvement and information of the church in points wherein formerly it's adversaries were thought to triumph over it. More, and greater, success of which kind is daily to be expected. The refinements and sneers of infidelity are perpetually vanishing before this species of solid and weighty evidence. And in proportion as the veil of prejudice and ignorance is removed the greater and more rapid will be the triumph of our faith.

From considerations like these the strongest reasons result for cheerful confidence in the promise and prophecy contained in my text. The most discouraging circumstance arises from the lives of Christians being at such variance with their engagements and their hopes. If we behave like infidels, it is of little consequence what is our faith. The blessings offered to us are evidently conditional. They are covenanted mercies, and we have our

parts to execute, in order to entitle us to the stipulated engagements in return. If we fail in them we can have no expectations from God. For agreeably to the case of the people of Nineveh, without care and virtuous penitence, in perfect consistency with such declarations of it's continuance, the light of the Gospel may be withdrawn. But in abatement of this alarm, and to add fresh vigour to our hopes, the christian and charitable efforts of those who now command my service, are of considerable weight.

The former part of my discourse seems a fair comment on my text, and no unapt prelude to the business of this day. The remainder shall be confined to the immediate object of it; to commemorate and promote the end for which this meeting is established.

Impressed with a strong persuasion of the truth of the doctrine now explained, and excited by the glorious consequences presented to their hope, they have dressed the " garden into which the good seed " has been cast." Within the limits of their plan,
which

which is extensive, and requires much discretion and holy zeal to regulate it, they have been at no small care and pains to cultivate the soil, and make it productive of a plenteous crop.

Were we only to contemplate that portion of our present congregation, which consists of so large a circle of young persons, collected from charitable seminaries, endowed for the purpose of useful education, throughout the districts of this large metropolis, and from those immediately around; it will be most strikingly evident how greatly we are indebted to them as members of our christian community. It is indeed a principal topic to be dwelt upon in a discourse from the pulpit on this occasion, to which this engaging spectacle here presented to our view irresistibly leads our attention, and disposes us cordially to sympathize in the humane feelings of their generous guardians and protectors.

For what stronger evidence can be given of the significance of amiable charity, or a perfect love of Christ, than to trace it's application to the tender

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and fufceptible ftate of youth? To fearch under the roof of poverty for inmates of this defcription, to furnifh them with means of acquiring an honeft maintenance, and to inftil into them religious principles, are the fureft methods of diffufing focial happinefs, and of promoting rational piety, which is it's firmeft bafis. The early feafon of childhood is an opportunity for this neceffary bufinefs not to be neglected. Our tendernefs for it fhould be expreffed, not only in providing things convenient for the body, but more efpecially in adminiftering to the infant-mind the "pure milk of " God's word," and in bringing it up "in the " nurture and admonition of the Lord."

How compaffionable then muft be their unhappy lot to whom the preffure of fevere neceffity denies thefe falutary improvements; and in whofe minds the baneful weeds of ignorance and vice are fuffered to over-run and poison every worthy inclination? In fuch ftriking instances of diftreff this charitable Society interpoles. In the ftrict gospel fenfe of the expreffion they vifit wretched families oppreffed by
 sorrows

sorrows of so peculiar a nature, that even should such as are adverse to existence be surmounted, yet do these keep the afflicted in a situation little better than the brutes. Under which frequently, it were preferable they had perished rather than, destitute of moral and religious principles, they should in a more advanced stage of life be considered as the pests of society, and be justly devoted as sacrifices to the severity of law.

The faithful disciple of our compassionate Redeemer is in this manner not unmindful of his duty to his fellow-creatures, and will fly to their succour when oppressed by any calamity. He not only therefore on such calls for his humane help diligently “ attends the sick; clothes the naked; “ feeds the hungry, and comforts the orphan and the “ captive;” but whenever opportunity offers itself to heal the weakness, and relieve the wants of the human mind, he with pleasure avails himself of it to increase the number of Christ's flock, and joyfully applies the wholesome medicines provided in

his gospel for all " who thus labour and are heavy
" laden."

In the present wretched state of the community, when neither the properties, fame, nor persons of individuals stand secure from violation; at a time when neither legal punishment now, nor inevitable judgment hereafter, seem any longer to alarm the conscience, or deter from crimes, it is religious and civil wisdom to advert to reformation. But the voice of the advocate for mischief is loud, and resounds in every street, whilst that of industrious piety is free from noise and ostentation, is gentle, and scarce at leisure to solicit for attention. Unless therefore it is permitted a proper and persevering address to the infant mind, it cannot expect to be listened to, however fraught with instruction the lessons are which it inculcates. Early precautions of this kind have every advantage in their favour, if the applications are made as soon as the child is capable of receiving them. For when once the right impression is fixed, no bad example, nor evil temptation will efface it. But

should this kindly season for the growth of virtue be neglected, mischievous habits and dispositions, exclude all access to amendment; and that industrious, commendable demeanour, which opens the door for substance, health, and general prosperity to "enter in, and to dwell there," is swallowed up by uncomfortable laziness and poverty.

Who then can hesitate about the merit of those institutions, which employ their attention to sow the good seed in young minds, and to eradicate the bad from them? The specimen before us of their success, which so much encourages perseverance, carries with it every favourable appearance. The sight of such a company of children, which, though so numerous, bear small proportion to others dispersed throughout the kingdom on similar systems of education, is peculiarly engaging; and to partake in their devotion, solemnly offered up in hymns of thanksgivings for the mercies bestowed on them, must animate every benevolent heart with the most grateful sensibility.

But

But this demeanour, unsupported by proper conduct afterwards, is superficial and transient. Observe them therefore in the dwellings of their parents and masters. There you may expect to find them patterns of decency and industry, introducing comfort where wretchedness before had entire possession; being enabled, by the lessons they have received, to support the characters of excellent relations, and entering into their respective occupations with integrity and skill. Consider this useful grain thus collected, and ranged before us in annual succession; and from these, as well as from other such deposits dispersed throughout the kingdom, may we not presume the harvest will be plenteous of religious and worthy members of society?

The labours of all who are propitious to such establishments, should they stop here, well deserve this tribute of acknowledgment which is regularly paid to them. But the Society extend their attention yet further. To promote the dominion of our Saviour they follow up the impressions

sions they have made, by circulating in the community at large such plain and pious tracts, as may remind persons of all descriptions of the respective christian duties to which they are severally obliged, and keep them confirmed and steady members of our national and protestant establishment. For it is not only the offspring who employ such charitable concern, the parent also is addressed by them with equal solicitude on these momentous subjects. Their printed lists of excellent compositions, filled with various and solid instruction, to train men in the faith and practice which are essential to their happiness, point out their exertions in this particular. There are few places to a very wide extent, where these, with many other moral admonitions against vice and error, adapted to the same purpose, and prepared with equal skill and knowledge, have not made their way. The effect of them has been correspondent to the laudable wishes of their able and pious authors. They have answered the most excellent purposes, and are received with gratitude and advantage wherever they are dispersed.

Useful education and instruction in righteousness, within the comprehensive circuit of these dominions, thus employ the liberality of these benevolent persons. But no partiality in favour of their own country shuts up their compassion from more distant regions. Whenever a fit opportunity offers itself to them, the same blessings are imparted, By their endeavours, in the apostolical sense, and under the same but more humble influence of the holy Ghost, may we not almost literally say, that Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia, Arabia, Egypt, and the East-Indies, have “heard them speak,” each “in his own tongue, the wonderful works “ God?”

Acts ii. 11.

New scenes are still continually opening to their view. To these no doubt, if enabled, with equal ardour they are ready to advert. The late discoveries which our gallant adventurers have in various climates made, with amazing and laudable perseverance, afford the most encouraging opportunity for the utmost reach of this highest species of benevolence. Undoubtedly many considerable benefits

its result to science of every kind from such well concerted and important expeditions. But the principal object to which they all should tend, is the glory of God and the good of his creatures. And the time approaches, may it not be passed by without the proper application ! when the same Almighty hand, which conducted these heroes thro' so many perils to those uncivilized inhabitants, shall likewise lead to them, through us his instruments, some well instructed missionary, to open before them the Book of Christian Revelation, and to expound to them the inexhaustible store of truths contained in it. For in that sacred volume we are informed, that the whole world is to embrace the word of salvation delivered by Jesus Christ. To this therefore the zeal of the Society may address itself, and if duly encouraged, will rejoice to convey to such places these glad tidings. “ The harvest in-^{Mat. ix. 37, 38.} deed is plenteous.” We should therefore not only “ pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth the “ requisite labourers, and implements of husband-
“ ry into his harvest,” but contribute out of our
c abundance

abundance of wisdom and of wealth towards the advancement of so interesting a work.

But after what has been represented upon this subject on other occasions, as well as the present, little need be added to enforce the regular impressions. My text has told us, that the “ kingdom of heaven ” is to be considered as vegetative grain ; which requires a proper soil, and honest industry to cultivate it. Under which circumstances, the growth of it will correspond to the natural progress of a plant, gradually expanding itself to every possible degree of ornament and use. The actual state of it has been proved to answer to this figurative and instructive language, from the present condition of Christendom, and the countries now opening upon us for its further progress, notwithstanding many unfavourable appearances, and the apprehended inconsistency of them with the meaning of the parable. And amongst not the least hopeful, the pious intentions of this Society have, tho’ imperfectly, yet sufficiently for the argument, been stated.

What impressions then is it natural to expect should result from these considerations? Can we, when we reflect on this exemplary behaviour, these scriptural admonitions, and so encouraging a spectacle as these children now present to us, retire from this magnificent and sacred structure, wherein we have assembled to promote God's glory, and the cause of religious wisdom, and not remember the pious and charitable demeanour which should be excited by their united powers? That the purpose of our meeting on this occasion is to convince us how much it is our duty, according to our several abilities, that each of us should "go and do likewise;" that is, should diffuse, as wide as possible, the blessings of this our labour of love: Because we know it to be the doctrine of reason and revelation, that "the sacrifice of the lips," unaccompanied by "good works," is idle homage, and will not be accepted by the great Sovereign of Mercy.

We will hope, therefore, that the wise and encouraging lessons of the Gospel of Charity, which prescribe such measures to support and scatter its

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blessings throughout the human race; and the recollection of the good effects attendant on these well regulated institutions, will together contribute to produce in our minds the right and just effect. For if this should prove the consequence of such commemorations, every well-wisher to his country, (however cool and indifferent he may be to the establishment and advancement of the cause of Christianity) for the moral and social uses alone to which they are manifestly applicable, will esteem them of sufficient importance to give his sanction to such schemes. But he who fills up the measure of this worthy character, by the indispensable addition of christian graces, which are the crown and perfection of true wisdom, will decidedly enter into the whole of the principles which actuate their zeal; and not only enforce them by commendations and good wishes, but by generous assistance in all those particulars on which they may depend for their support.

Thus will the best interests of our whole nature receive from us the tribute which is due to each.

each. We shall act as becomes grateful, dutiful, and rational creatures, dependent on an all-bountiful Creator for every blessing we enjoy ; approve ourselves faithful disciples of our gracious Master and Redeemer, convince the world that we are judicious and charitable members of society in instances of distinguished and diffusive utility, and at the same time essentially express a perfect knowledge of those objects, which are most interesting to the personal welfare of every individual. The result of such prudent and comprehensive conduct, which so largely promotes the glory of God, the prosperity of our fellow-creatures, and our own best advantage, must draw down blessings upon a nation so conscientiously and wisely occupied, and render it prosperous and happy to the most distant period.

F I N I S.



A
S E R M O N

Preached in the CATHEDRAL CHURCH of
ST. PAUL, LONDON:
On THURSDAY, JUNE 1, 1786.

BEING THE TIME
Of the YEARLY MEETING of the
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MDCCCLXXXVI.

M A L A C H I II. 10.

HAVE WE NOT ALL ONE FATHER? HATH NOT
ONE GOD CREATED US?

IT is a strong argument in favour of our holy religion, that the duties it enjoins are founded on our nature, as rational and social beings. In order to be good Christians we must still remember we are men.

In no instance of duty is the truth of this observation more evident than in the obligation we are under to acts of benevolence, from the relation we stand in to each other.

No man can be insensible to the wants of his fellow-creatures, who hath not first learned to forget himself. All the pleas of exemption from acts of brotherly affection cannot but be unsatisfactory to such as are perswaded of this plain truth,

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truth, that, notwithstanding all the necessary distinctions, which rank or fortune makes between us in civil society, we are all the children of one common parent; and subjects of the same almighty power.

Obvious, however, as this conclusion appears, from a general view of human nature, it is not easily admitted either by the rich or poor; the first are averse to the proof of it from vanity, and the others disposed to doubt it from envy and discontent.

It cannot indeed be denied, that, while some men are possessed of an abundance far greater than what either the comforts or conveniences of life require, there are multitudes, who, with all their care and industry, find it difficult to procure the necessary support of a miserable subsistence.

It must also be admitted, that, with regard to happiness, so far as this life only is concerned, health and prosperity are amongst our chief blessings; and that sickness and poverty are real evils.

From

From men therefore, who are unaccustomed to look into futurity, it is a natural question; Whence comes this partiality in the distribution of his gifts, if mankind are all equally related to their heavenly parent? Is God a respecter of persons, or have some men a better claim than their brethren to his favour and indulgence?

The only satisfactory solution of this apparent difficulty, is to be found in the Gospel of Christ. It teacheth us that man is designed for a state of Immortality; and that the several conditions of present distinction are all but different modes of trial, preparatory to the great end of his future existence. It teacheth also, that the good and evil of this temporary life can be truly estimated only by the effect, which it may have, in finally promoting or obstructing our eternal happiness.

Thus, what in truth cannot but be considered as a real blessing, with respect to our present situation, may in the end prove the source of future evil, far outweighing the worth of any transitory enjoyment whatever.

The consequence too of present sufferings may be the very reverse of what we endure for a while, under the pressure of poverty, sickness, and affliction.

The final effect of both prosperity and adversity depends on the use we make of them.

A due consideration therefore of God's providence, operating by an unequal distribution of his gifts on the several relations of civil life, and affording means for the display of various excellence, will not only remove some specious objections to the divine goodness and justice, but, by reminding the rich and the poor of the particular duties arising from their respective stations, may, I trust, prove a just recommendation of that pious institution, which, among other good effects of its zeal for promoting the real and practical knowledge of true religion, exhibits annually such a pleasing display of Christian benevolence as is scarcely to be paralleled in any other country, and hardly to be conceived even in our own by those
who

who have not been eye-witnesses to the scene before us.

It may not be improper to remark, that, unless human nature itself was other than it is, different degrees of rank and property are absolutely unavoidable.

Were we all placed on a level, yet could the fancied equality no longer subsist than while all men had equal degrees of prudence and virtue to maintain it. A dissipation of fortune must be the constant effect of sloth and folly; an increase of wealth the natural fruit of activity and discernment.

Add to this cause of inequality, that the different dispositions of men incline them to pursue happiness by various ways. Some, eagerly aspiring to raise themselves in rank and fortune, press forward on the busy scene of interest and ambition; while others preferring ease to glory, and content to abundance, suffer multitudes to pass by them;

and, being willingly left behind, naturally fall into the lower classes of society.

So long then as men differ in their qualities and opinions, the distinction of wealth and poverty is absolutely unavoidable.

It is indeed no difficult matter to persuade those who are in a state of affluence, that such an inequality is not only necessary, but that the happiness of mankind in general is thereby promoted.

Men in this, as in most other instances, readily admit an argument that coincides with their own interests and inclinations.

But the poor will not so easily be convinced, either of the necessity, or utility of such an unequal distribution. While the first are too apt to be elated by the accidental circumstances of a temporary pre-eminence, the latter are inclined to murmur against God's providence, and charge it with partiality and injustice.

True, nevertheless, it certainly is, (however either class may be unwilling to believe it,) that there is not so great a difference in the real comforts of mankind as there is in their rank and fortunes.

Many instances occur to prove, that the connection between wealth and happiness, poverty and misery, is not either necessary or general. Be their station ever so humble, they who have learnt to be virtuous, temperate, and contented, are possessed of a treasure far more valuable, than opulence can purchase, or poverty take away.

This is really the case considering our present life, independently of another; but when we reflect how small a proportion the utmost extent of our days bears to the boundless prospect of eternity; when we are convinced that it is not on the quality of the task imposed, but on the manner only in which we discharge it, that our future happiness and glory depend, how trifling are all the vain conceits of pride! how unworthy is it of God, or even of ourselves, to cavil at the
dispensa-

dispensations of divine providence, which we see but in part, and that part imperfectly!

Far more becoming is it for every man, high and low, rich and poor, to turn his thoughts, how he may best employ the talent committed to his charge, and approve himself a diligent and faithful servant in the sight of his Maker, his Judge, and his God.

What then is thy lot in life? Art thou reduced to poverty, overwhelmed with affliction, or oppressed with sickness or infirmity? Patience and resignation to the will of God, with confidence in his mercy through Jesus Christ, are the peculiar proofs required of thy piety and virtue. Check every sentiment of distrust, nor murmur as if thou wert hardly treated. God, who knoweth better than we do ourselves what is fittest for us, will not suffer any man to be tempted above what he is able to bear. His chastisement, which impatience represents as the effect of his displeasure or partiality, is in ordinary cases rather the wholesome discipline, or restraint, of fatherly affection.

Many

Many who hear me must be sensible, it was in some measure owing to the narrow state of their circumstances, that they were less vicious than they might have been, had they possessed the means of greater extravagance. David, even after he was raised from privacy to a throne, still thought it good for him that he had been afflicted; and Solomon pronounced sorrow preferable to laughter, because thereby the heart is made better.

If then such is the design and end of chastisement, that, although for the present it may seem grievous, it nevertheless naturally tends to our improvement and advantage, the Apostle's observation, that whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, is not less consolatory and encouraging than true.

Let then the poor and the afflicted, laying aside every weight that depresseth them, and the sin of distrust, with which they are so easily beset, run with patience the race that is before them.

Art thou, on the other hand, distinguished by affluence, health, and prosperity? Many and great are the dangers to which thy situation is exposed. More than ordinary firmness and moderation is required to withstand the temptations of vanity, sin, and pleasure, when the means of gratification are at hand. Hence it was that our blessed Saviour, acquainted with all the weakness of the human heart, declared; It was hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. Though few truths therefore may be less acceptable, yet those in the more exalted stations of life ought to be frequently reminded, that the difference among men ariseth not from any inherent excellence in the nature of some few above others, but that notwithstanding all the pride of rank, and all the insolence of wealth or power, the sons of men are in the sight of God still equal.

Away then with all the idle claims of arrogance and presumption, and let the rich also attend to the duties which are annexed to their condition. Patience and resignation, those capital virtues in a state of poverty and affliction, are of little merit
in

in him, who has every reason to be contented with his lot in life. Other duties are required of thee. Discharged as it were from the discipline of the severer virtues, it is thine to testify thy piety, obedience, and gratitude, by all the condescending offices of humanity and benevolence; it is thine, to close the breach of distinction, to comfort the afflicted, to instruct the ignorant; in a word, it is thine to deal thy superfluities to the wretched; and thereby convince them, that the ways of providence are just.

If, haply, these reflections have impressed upon the rich and poor a due sense of their particular obligations, I have only to add farther a few obvious remarks on the utility of these charitable institutions, which afford so pleasing a display of British beneficence.

What a number of poor children are here before us! Many of them orphans, the rest, whose parents are unable to give them such an education as may fit them for the lowest offices in society.

Had it not been for the protection of their humane benefactors, far the greater number, if not all, must have been left abandoned to misery and wickedness, with every difficulty, every temptation against them.

By the liberality of their fellow christians, and the prudent management of the disinterested Guardians who so kindly undertake the superintendence of this their adopted family, multitudes, in number scarcely credible, have been already rescued from destruction. Thousands in succession still continue to have just ideas of civil and religious duty impressed on their tender minds, so that it may reasonably be hoped they will (under God's blessing) become useful members of the community instead of a burthen upon it.

It surely is not improper, and I trust it may not be useless to observe, that even should the usual fund of supply to these parochial schools not decrease, it will yet be less sufficient than it has been for their support; the numbers of the poor are daily increasing, while fewer means present themselves,

themselves, especially to the weaker sex, for the gain of an honest subsistence. There are indeed many branches of business and manufacture, wherein they certainly might (particularly by their own sex) be as usefully, more charitably, and, may I not add, more decently employed than they are; but the common practice is not in their favour; and they in whose power it is to guard against encroachments on their province, have of late years, through inattention, prejudice, or fashion, encouraged them to such a degree, that it becomes an object worthy of more particular consideration. Multitudes of those unhappy women who infest our streets, may have fallen victims to the seduction of flattery and falsehood, but not a few have had the additional temptation of necessity, to deviate from the path of innocence.

A sober and religious education, under proper habits of restraint and order, is the best preservative that can be applied to youth and inexperience: It is at the same time, a recommendatory qualification for the ordinary purposes of life, whereby

whereby an honest industry may be most secure of success.

Were the precepts contained in our Church Catechism the only useful learning to be acquired, that single attainment, in a mere political view, would be worth all the labour and expence of these institutions, supposing neither humanity nor religion concerned in their establishment.

But the zeal and attention of the Society, which first promoted these useful seminaries, ceaseth not with having prepared the soil for culture. The annual and occasional subscriptions to their fund have hitherto enabled them to be instrumental in cherishing the seeds of piety in their advances to maturity, by the dispersion of the holy scriptures. With equal solicitude for the general reformation of the community at large have they contributed to, and rendered easy, the circulation of many pious and moral tracts, which are admirably well calculated to extend the knowledge and enforce the practice of christianity.

At the expence of this Society the holy scriptures have been translated for the use of our fellow subjects, who, though living under the same government, speak a language different from our own. Nor has its benevolent exertions in this and other respects been confined within the limits of our national connections. The distressed Protestants, who, some years past, were driven from their habitations on the continent, received occasional relief, and were established in a new settlement, from the fund of this institution. Hence also the distant nations of the East have had the Gospel communicated to them, and we trust in God's mercy, that notwithstanding the knowledge of his Son may in those parts be still compared to a feeble ray shining in a dark place, yet in good time he will be pleased to make perfect our endeavours to diffuse the brightness of his glory; so that they who now sit under the shade of ignorance, may at length be called into the marvellous light of his truth, and all the people of the earth become the people of God.

Having I hope in some degree answered the occasion of this solemnity, by shewing what is the particular

ticular duty of the rich and poor, as well as by pointing out the great utility of the institution itself, there remains only that we beg a blessing upon so pious and benevolent an undertaking. May God grant therefore that all they, who are admitted to the advantages of it, may in the spirit of humility, meekness and submission, profit by the early lessons of obedience, industry and religion !

To such as are intrusted with affluence may the Almighty grant a will, proportionate to their ability, to turn that talent into a blessing to the public and themselves, which is so frequently perverted into an instrument of sin, excess, and folly.

So may the distressed parent and the indigent orphan join in grateful prayer for their generous benefactors, and ages yet unborn have cause to bless their memory.

Now to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be all honor, &c.

F I N I S.

A
S E R M O N

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MDCCCLXXXVIII.

M A T T. XXI. 15, 16.

15. WHEN THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND SCRIBES SAW THE WONDERFUL THINGS THAT HE DID, AND THE CHILDREN CRYING IN THE TEMPLE AND SAYING, HOSANNA TO THE SON OF DAVID, THEY WERE SORE DISPLEASED, 16. AND SAID UNTO HIM, HEAREST THOU WHAT THESE SAY? AND JESUS SAITH UNTO THEM, YEA; HAVE YE NEVER READ, "OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF BABES AND SUCKLINGS " THOU HAST PERFECTED PRAISE?"

THE chief priests and scribes had corrupted that holy religion which should have led them to Christ.—When Christ, therefore, came, not to flatter, but to reform, the pride of their hearts, they despised his person and abhorred his doctrine.

They and the children were equally witnesses of the wonderful things that he did. The children, struck with what they saw, in the honest simplicity of their soul, ascribed unto him the honor due unto his name: "they cried in the temple and said, Hosanna to the Son of David." The chief priests were sore displeased, both at the manifestation of power which they could not deny, and, no less, at this small mark of respect shown to the meek and lowly Jesus. They, therefore, said unto him, as it were in derision, and, perhaps, not without more mischievous views, "Hearest thou what these say? *these* poor, ignorant, idle, clamorous children?" To such insinuations our Blessed Lord replied, with his usual dignity, only referring these Masters in Israel to their own Scriptures; "Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" This answer was a sufficient reproof to the pride and obstinacy of the Jews; it infers, moreover, that the Searcher of all hearts, the great Author of our Faith, considered even children as capable of receiving

ceiving just, religious impressions by the use of proper means, and of profiting by them. If this then be so, it is hard to say upon what principle instruction can be withheld from them, of whatever rank or condition they may be.—The great moral duties are the same to all : a due observance of social and relative duties is of equal importance to the good and happiness of society at large, in one branch and in another. The neglect of obedience and proper subordination in the inferior ranks is, at least, as prejudicial to the general good, as the abuse and insolence of power in more elevated stations.

That a state of order and society is the only state proper and natural to mankind, is a point, that, one would think, should not, in this age of the world, require many arguments to prove it. Every power of the human mind, every affection of the human heart, is more than demonstration. The great Author of Nature, who supplies those powers, who kindles those affections within us, and who placed us in that condition for which

he had so fitted us, has address'd us, in his own Word, as social creatures, as bound to all that variety of relative duties, which arise from a state of society, which constitute it's beauty and happiness, and are all comprehended in that one Evangelical term, Charity. Notwithstanding this, some of the most admired, political writers, of the last and present age, proceed on a directly contrary hypothesis. They set out with considering the original condition of Man as nothing better than a savage, tumultuous equality, and all the advantages of society as the gradual work of mere human effort and ingenuity. Such theories are equally groundless and dangerous: they are groundless, because not supported by the evidence of fact; the only evidence of any account in the question: they are dangerous, because they must either annihilate all social duties, both publick and private, or rest the obligation of them on false and insecure grounds. It were unedifying to examine, or combat farther, systems so utterly chimerical in their first principle. It is our business, as the Gospel hath done before, to consider

9

mankind,

mankind, as they actually are, as placed in society, by God's own appointment, amidst a various distribution of rank, wealth, power, and all the exteriour circumstances of life.

It is not to be denied, that, on this view of things, we shall still find a large share of misery and wretchedness in the world. Of this, part manifestly ariseth from the inevitable condition of our nature; from the impotence of childhood, and age, and disease; part too, from a neglect of those moral and relative duties, which reason and religion require, from flagrant violations of the great law of charity.—The first of these have their claim for support and comfort on the best and most powerful feelings of our hearts, and would, in general, find it. But experience shows, that those feelings are extinguishable, and sometimes extinguished by the prevalence of selfish, vicious, and inordinate passion. The claim, therefore, is enforced by the Laws of our State; the only State upon earth, to it's honour be it spoken, that hath ever provided a fixed and permanent maintenance
for

for the poor and helpless. The law of humanity, and the law of the land, may both be abused; both frequently are abused; and those aids, which are due only to the helpless, are misapplied to the support of wilful vice and laziness. Where this is the case, the interests of virtue and society are so far injured. But it doth not follow from thence, that all principles of charity should be extirpated from our breasts, the Poor-Laws erased from our Statute-Book, and distressed Innocence suffered to perish, for fear Vice should fraudulently contrive to steal encouragement that is not intended for it. No; the fair argument to be drawn from such abuses pleads only for a certain degree of prudence in the application of our private charities, and in the execution of the wise and benevolent laws of our most excellent Constitution. In the execution of these special laws, one may say, without impropriety, something must have been wrong, and that pretty generally. We could not else hear, as we daily do, the bare maintenance of such as can do little or nothing for themselves (and such alone are justly the object
of

of those laws,) complained of, as a grievous and almost insupportable burthen. That the numbers of Poor are greater than heretofore, is most certain.—It is the consequence, not of the decay, but of the wealth and prosperity, of the country; of an increased population, an extended commerce, and improved husbandry. These are not topics for murmur and complaint. We should, therefore, pay with cheerfulness what can be legally demanded on this score, and still retain an unabated fund of benevolence, to furnish a ready assistance; on every proper occasion that may fall in our way.

The far greater part of the calamities of the world are such as arise from ourselves, from our own misconduct, from a violent and wilful perversion of the laws both of God and man. These are more easily prevented than remedied. Of the necessity of doing something in the way of prevention, all countries and all ages seem to have been sensible. Hence have grown the several establishments in the world, publick and private, for the

the purpose of Education; to instil principles, and enforce habits, in the minds and practice of youth, that may tend to regulate the future conduct of their lives, on some uniform and consistent plan or other. This hath been the sense of serious men in all times. It is founded in truth and a just notion of the nature of man.

Modern speculatists, who set up claims to a certain dignity and excellence in human nature, that do not now belong to it, decry every mode of early education as mere ground of prejudice. Call it prejudice, or what you will, an early knowledge and veneration of that which is certainly true and right in itself, which tends to our own happiness, and to the happiness and order of society, must be beneficial. Surely, it were no ill office to direct a stranger in his way, notwithstanding it might be possible for him, by a competent skill in geography, to ascertain the precise situation of the city to which he was going. The case applies in all points to the instruction of youth.

Left

Left so important a matter should not be sufficiently secured by argument and the reason of things, it is supported also by the highest of all authority. In both volumes of God's Word it is strongly recommended and insisted on. It is assigned by God himself as the express reason for manifesting his counsels to Abraham, that he would impart them with zeal and authority to his family. " Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him; and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgement." When Moses delivered the Law, which he had received from the mouth of God, to the people of Israel, it was with this positive injunction annexed; " These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children." Our Blessed Saviour, when on earth, taught us, by his example, not to slight or neglect the state of children. His compassion of their weakness and dependence, his love of their innocency yet unblemished by the world,

Gen. xviii.
17, 19.

Deut. vi. 6, 7.

he expressed, on several occasions. “ Suffer, he
 “ faith to his Disciples, suffer little children to
 “ come unto me, and forbid them not; for of
 Luke xviii. “ such is the kingdom of God.” St. Paul too
 16.
 Eph. vi. 4. “ Lord.” The judgement on Eli and his house
 is a notable instance of the mind of God in this
 matter; “ I have told him, that I will judge his
 “ house for ever, for the iniquity which he
 “ knoweth; because his sons made themselves
 1 Sam.iii.13. “ vile, and he restrained them not.” A formi-
 dable denunciation to all, who, from carelessness,
 a misplaced indulgence, or a conceited philoso-
 phy, neglect the early institution of such as fall
 properly under their charge; and, no doubt, will
 extend, in a Christian country, to such as are able,
 but unwilling, to make provision for the instruc-
 tion of the poor. *They* are our charge, committed
 to us by our dear Master: it is from our kindness
 to them, and our attention to their best interests,
 that he hath declared he will estimate the mea-
 sure of our love to himself. It is the distinguish-
 ing

ing character of the Gospel, that it comprehends the whole human race: it's laws, it's blessings, and it's awful sanctions concern all equally: it is accordingly addressed to all, without respect or distinction. The great Author of it said, therefore, of himself before hand, "Thy law is within my heart. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation. Lo! I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart. I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation. I have not concealed thy loving kindness and thy truth from the great congregation." In Psal. xl. 9, 10. accomplishment of all this, when he came from heaven on his high errand, "to the Poor the Gospel was actually preached;" among them Matt. xi. 5. were it's first advances the most successful: for when the glad tidings had been industriously carried over a considerable part of the world, the Apostle testifieth to his Corinthian converts, "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called." Shall then that gate, which 1 Cor. i. 26.

God himself in his mercy opened to the poor, be now shut against them? Shall we, who have received the Gospel through their hands, now conceal from them all knowledge of their duty as men and Christians, of their hopes and interest in Christ and his promises? Yet this, in fact, we do, unless we furnish means for their early instruction. The parents have it not in their power, perhaps not in their inclination. If then the children are to have instruction at all, it must be by the charitable assistance of those who are better able and better disposed to it. We find instances of the attention of the Christian Church, in early times, to this business. Soon after churches began to be erected, there were libraries annexed to many of them. Schools also were sometimes kept in the church, or buildings adjoining to it. Of this there is abundant evidence. In the Sixth General Council, we are told, there was a Canon directing "Presbyters in country towns and villages to instruct all such children as were sent to them; for which service they were to exact no reward, nor take any thing, except what the parents of the children

children might choose to tender by way of voluntary offering." These were Charity Schools in Bingham Or. Eccl. B. viii. ch. vii. § 12. the fullest extent of the word; and enjoined by publick authority.

In this country, during the times of Popery, almost all instruction was engrossed by the Religious Houses; and chiefly intended as a preparation for the Ministry. On the dissolution of these Houses, some of the schools were endowed, but still for the same purpose. Some Catechetical instruction however was enjoined by our Reformed Liturgy to be given to *all*, previous to their Confirmation by the Bishop; and for this end a Form provided, which, in point of clearness of expression, and importance of matter, is not to be equalled by any summary of the kind in the Christian world. The giving of this instruction was rested on the consciences of parents and sponsors. Many among the poorer sort, of course, never obtained it. To remedy this evil, Charity Schools, of the sort we are now contemplating, were set up by voluntary contributions in the metropolis,

tropolis, and other considerable towns. The arguments against such a measure have been again and again answered: the most plausible of them proceed on an assumption that is utterly false; viz. that the education intended will raise the children above the condition they are to hold in life. In fact the education, intended and provided for, is such only as may fit them for that condition; and without which they will probably be fit for none. Circumstanced as the world is, if some pains be not taken among the lower ranks to give them early impressions of virtue and religion, and early habits of industry, they will soon catch other impressions, and other habits, that will render them the bane of society, and terminate in their own certain wretchedness. A truly Christian spirit cannot be more substantially proved, than in a strenuous endeavour to prevent those evils. We have now before our eyes a display of the effects of this spirit, such as perhaps the world hath not elsewhere seen; such as cannot be contemplated by a mind susceptible of tender emotions, without the most devout and pious rapture:

thousands

thousands of souls rescued from the snares of the world, from the jaws of sin, and death, and misery; dedicated to God; prepared for that eternal weight of glory and happiness, which nothing less than the precious blood of Christ himself could purchase.

These benefits, transcendently great as they are, are not limited to what we here see. The pious labours of the Society are extended much farther; and annually contribute, with increased success, under the furtherance of God's blessing, to dispel the gloom of Pagan and Mahometan darkness in distant regions; and to expose and defeat the tricks and impositions of Romish craft, ever forward to substitute prejudice and false religion in the place of barbarous ignorance. Even at home, among ourselves, instruction is silently conveyed to every corner of the Island, by a constant distribution, under the Society's direction, of the Scriptures, of our own most excellent Liturgy, and other religious books and tracts, adapted to all occasions and all capacities. The demand for these is of
late

late amazingly increased: a happy proof, among others, that something like a spirit of religion and good manners is beginning to revive among us. One would hope that the demand might still rise, and that the supply would always be made, to answer the demand to the utmost possible extent. Such supply can only be provided for by your charity; and of charity such as yours, it is one authentick character, that it “never faileth.”

1 Cor. xiii.
8.

There is manifest and very urgent reason why we should encourage and satisfy this demand as much as may be. The Press, at this time, teems with publications of another kind, and of a directly contrary tendency. Fatal poison is by this means diligently circulated in all possible shapes, and among all ranks. It is not confined to the gross ribaldry of profane and licentious songs, to the insinuating arts of modern novel-writing; it assumes the more specious form of philosophy, of history, and even the sacred name of religion itself. New modes are daily devised of disseminating all this more widely and more effectually; periodical criticisms in News-Papers and Magazines

zines are employed to force it into notice and stamp it's pretensions with decisive encomium. It is from this Society that the surest and best antidote is to be looked for. The source of religious instruction here hath hitherto continued pure and un sullied ; extreme vigilance, it is evident, hath become more than ever necessary to keep it so.

It is not, however, by instructive lessons alone that the poor are to be trained, so as to be made useful to themselves and the publick. Practical habits must be acquired. Of these the first and most essential are habits of industry. These are in themselves important duties ; they are, at the same time, the best guard and security to keep men constant in the discharge of every other part of their duty moral and religious. Indolence is the inlet to every seduction both of the world and of our own corrupt hearts. For these reasons this Society hath wisely recommended, that, in Charity Schools, labour, of some sort or other, should always be made a necessary part of the education. The proposal hath been adopted in

many instances ; certainly with great advantage in all other respects ; and no ways in prejudice of that learning which was the original design in these establishments.

I have now, I think, touched on the several objects principally adverted to by the Society. They are highly important in every view ; but they are such, as can be completely attained only by that liberality which distinguishes this nation above all others on the face of the earth.

As friends to the good order and prosperity of our country ; as anxiously concerned for the most substantial interests of our countrymen, both temporal and eternal ; as stewards of Him who left us in trust for the poor ; as fellow-labourers with God ; we are pressingly called upon to contribute with alacrity, both of our substance, and, where we have opportunity, of our pains and attention also, to the support and advancement of these truly Christian designs.

I need

I need add no more. It remains only that we fervently implore the blessing of God on this your work and labour of love; that he will prosper it to the glory of his great name, and the furtherance of his kingdom upon earth; 'till such time as these, the children of your care now, then the crown of your rejoicing, together with you and all who love the appearing of our Lord and Saviour, shall unite, with one heart and one voice, and cry, "Hosanna to the Son of David: " blessed is He, that cometh in the name of the " Lord."

F I N I S.

A
S E R M O N

Preached in the CATHEDRAL CHURCH of
ST. PAUL, LONDON:
On THURSDAY, JUNE 14, 1792.

BEING THE TIME
Of the YEARLY MEETING of the
CHILDREN Educated in the CHARITY-
SCHOOLS, in and about the Cities of LONDON
and WESTMINSTER.

BY THE RIGHT REVEREND
JOHN, LORD BISHOP OF BANGOR.

Published at the Request of the SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE,
And the TRUSTEES of the several SCHOOLS.

To which is annexed,
AN ACCOUNT OF THE
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MDCXCII.



PROVERBS XIV. 34.

RIGHTEOUSNESS EXALTETH A NATION, BUT SIN
IS A REPROACH TO ANY PEOPLE.

THAT *Righteousness* is necessary to exalt a Nation, and make it flourish and prosper; and, on the other hand, that *Sin* is a reproach to any People, and, if suffered to prevail, will prove ruinous and destructive to it, are truths, which may easily be proved by considering the end and design of Society, and the effect, which *Virtue* and *Vice* naturally have upon it *.

By Society is to be understood a Body of People joined together by just and righteous laws; and

* See a Book entitled "An Account of the Societies for the Reformation of Manners, &c. &c., in which the Subject concerning the Effect of *Virtue* and *Vice* on Communities is well considered.

A SERMON PREACHED

therefore, whilst these laws are observed; or, in other words, whilst the Members live virtuously, the Society, if rightly constituted, must needs flourish, because the end is answered, for which it was at first formed. As long as due obedience is paid to the laws, the Society may be said to be true to itself; its peace and happiness will be preserved; and as nothing can arise from within to disturb it, so no Power from without can easily overthrow it. But if a Society become false to itself; if its Members violate the just and righteous laws, upon which it is founded; if *Vice* prevail instead of *Virtue*, disorder and confusion must ensue; such a *State* being *divided against itself cannot stand*; and as its strength will be weakened by intestine quarrels and disputes, so will it fall an easy prey to any *Foreign Force*.

But we need not spend our time in inquiring into the effect, which *Virtue* and *Vice* have on Society: There is no want of argument to evince this truth: Experience bears ample testimony to it: The Rise and Fall of *Kingdoms* have been constantly

stantly found to be in proportion to the prevalency of *Virtue* or *Vice* among them; and no People was ever known to continue prosperous, after it had forsaken the virtuous principles and maxims, upon which it was founded. These are truths, which cannot be controverted, and are known to all, who are conversant in the histories of Nations; and they, who have not this knowledge, nor have been accustomed to take, into their contemplation, such great Objects, as *States* and *Kingdoms*, and to trace, with exactness, the causes of their Progress or Decline, may look into private *Families*, and consider the effect, which *Virtue* and *Vice* have upon them. But if, as the case is, private Families rise or fall in proportion to their virtuous or vitious conduct, so must Nations also; because a Nation is nothing but a collection of private Families united under one and the same Government. But the Whole, the collective Body cannot flourish, whilst the Members, the several Parts of it, are in a weak and languishing condition: Nor on the other hand, can a *State* decay, or be in the least danger of ruin, whilst its constituent Parts are strong and vi-

gorous *. Every Whole is made up of it's Parts, and whatever preserves it's Parts, must preserve the *Whole* also †.

But the truth of the Text, which I have been endeavouring to establish, will be still further confirmed by considering the practice of all wise Law-givers: For they did not only found their States in good and righteous Laws; but, in order to promote the practice of *Virtue* and *Religion*, and, by that means, give strength and permanency to their Governments, added Laws, from time to time as they saw occasion, for the punishment of *Profaneness* and *Immorality*: And it must be granted, that such penal Laws have a direct tendency to promote *Virtue*, as they prevent the growth of *Vice* by hindering it from becoming quite general; as they deter some from offending, whilst they keep others from being

* Account of the Societies for the Reformation of Manners, &c. passim. Mr. Woodward's Rise and Progress of certain Religious Societies in and about London and Westminster.

† Demonstration of the Law of Nature by Dr. Samuel Parker, Bishop of Oxford, P. 26.

profligately wicked; as they, not only secure the Innocent from the contagion of *Vice*, but protect them also from the mischiefs, to which they would be exposed from unrestrained *Wickedness*.

But if penal Laws directly tend to promote *Virtue* by punishing *Vice*; if they are a restraint on some, who will not be restrained in any other way; How comes it to pass, that *Vice* abounds so much every where? Why are penal Statutes, for the punishment of it, attended with so little success? And to come home to ourselves, To what is it owing, that *Profaneness* and *Immorality* are so prevalent among us, notwithstanding all, that our Legislature hath done towards the suppression of them?

Now these, it must be acknowledged, are *Questions* of some consequence, and well worth our consideration: And in answer to them, it will be proper to observe, that Laws cannot execute themselves, and therefore, unless Those, who are intrusted with the *Executive Power*, will give them
life

life and spirit, they are but a *Dead Letter* *, and may be trampled on with impunity: But of all Laws, such as are made for the suppression of *Vice* and *Immorality*, are the least likely to be well executed; because, whilst Some, on whom it is incumbent to put them in force, have not courage to do their Duty; Others are remiss in the execution of their Office from an excess of tenderness and good nature †. But if the *Magistrates* had courage and resolution to do their Duty in all cases, they would even then succeed in part only; because there are but few things, which they can do upon view, or upon their own knowledge. In general they can know only, as they are informed, and can punish in no case without good proof: But how difficult is that to be obtained! Men are extremely apt to complain of the Iniquity of the times, and to ascribe it to the want of attention in the *Executive Power*; but will any one of those, who are so

* Account of the Societies, &c. &c. page 2. Mr. Nelson's Life of Bishop Bull, page 366. Ibid. 450.

† Account of Societies, &c. &c. page 56.

loud in their complaints, assist a *Magistrate*, who is willing to perform his Duty? Will they stand forth, and give evidence, or do any one thing, which is necessary to convict Offenders? But if Men were more willing to assist the *Magistrate*, than they generally are, very little advantage would, in the end, be derived even from thence; because single and unconnected Persons would, by being Informers, expose themselves to more trouble, hazard, and inconvenience, than they could possibly bear. But would not this difficulty be removed, and much Good, at the same time, done to the cause of *Virtue* and *Religion*, if a large number of zealous and well-disposed Persons were formed into Societies, on purpose to assist the *Magistrate* in enforcing the Laws against *Vice* and *Immorality*? Men, so united and connected, might stand their Ground against the combinations of the *Wicked*; and be able to bear all the trouble and expence, in which confederate Vice would certainly involve them*: They would be placed above the attacks of the slander, and calumny, which false lips and

* Account of the Societies, &c. p. 17, 18, 19.

lying tongues would be sure to utter against them : In a word they would be safe and secure from all the inconveniencies and dangers, to which single Persons would, in such a work, be unavoidably exposed* : And this cannot fail to remind many, who hear me, that Societies of this kind have existed in this Country, in some form or other, for a Century at least, and have, at different periods, been very diligent in bringing the *Lawless* and *Disobedient*, the *Ungodly* and *Profane*, to condign punishment†. But notwithstanding their pious endeavours for so many years, We shall be told, that *Vice* still abounds, and in the opinion of some rather gains ground upon us : And if we grant this, if we allow, that *Vice* has visibly increased of late years, it will not therefore follow, that these Societies have not been of some public Use : For who can say, that things would not have been much worse, bad as they are, if these Societies had not interposed ? I think it very certain, that they would : For what is so likely to restrain *Vice*, as to

* Account of the Societies, &c. p. 12.

† 1 Tim. i. 9.

make the practice of it uneasy and unsafe? What can so effectually suppress *Profaneness* and *Irreligion*, as to detect and bring Offenders to shame and punishment? And this has been done in a thousand Instances by these Societies*. But after all that their Zeal can do, though supported by the best Laws, and countenanced by the highest *Authority*†, It is too little to bring about the desired *Reformation*. *Vice*, notwithstanding all the difficulties and discouragements, which can be thrown in it's way, abounds

* Account of the Societies, &c. p. II.

† In 1697 King William, in consequence of an Address from the Commons in Parliament assembled, issued a Proclamation for Preventing and Punishing *Immorality* and *Profaneness*; and, in all the succeeding Reigns, Proclamations of the like kind have been made. His Present Majesty, in 1786 was most Graciously pleased to issue a Proclamation against *Profaneness* and *Immorality*, which being drawn up in a stronger and more pointed manner, than had been usual, and there happening *then* to be loud complaints of the Licentiousness and Irreligion of the Times, an uncommon Degree of Attention was paid to this Proclamation, in divers parts of the Kingdom, and particularly in Westminster, where a Society was formed for giving *Effect* to it. On this occasion, it cannot be improper to observe, that, besides Societies for carrying into execution the penal Laws against *Vice*, there are

abounds to a degree, which is very disgraceful to *Christianity*, and destructive of all good Order; and will continue to do so, till a way can be found to prevent Faults, as well as to punish the commission of them. For when People are so corrupt, and profligate as to come under public Censures, there are then but small hopes of any real amendment from punishment; and till the Evil can be cured in it's Source, *Vice* must, in some measure, prevail.

These then are the chief causes, why the Laws for suppressing *Vice* and *Immorality* are attended with so little success: These are the reasons, why penal

other Institutions equally useful at least in promoting a *Reformation of Manners*, though in a different way, such as the *Marine* and *Philanthropic Societies*. The first of which has, in the compass of a little more than twenty years, supplied the Royal Navy, and the ships of Merchants, with above *forty thousand* Boys, who being all taken from the Dregs of the People, without any subsistence, but from Stealing and Begging, would have proved an intolerable Nuisance to their Country, if this Remedy had not been applied. The other Society is in its infancy, but it's *Design* being to provide for the Children of Convicts, and of Persons confined in Prison, and other destitute Boys and Girls, it deserves the greatest Encouragement.

Statutes

Statutes can never bring about the desired *Reformation*. Recourse therefore must be had to some other Expedient; to something, that will prevent crimes; to something, that will cure the Evil in it's Source: And the most promising method seems to be To educate the Children and Youth of the Nation, in *Virtue*, and a sense of *Religion*; and till due care is taken of this, all endeavours towards a *Reformation* will fall very short of what many may expect.

These observations cannot but incline us to think favourably of the *Institution* now before us, the *Design* of which being to train up the Children of the lower Order of the People, in habits of *Virtue* and *Industry*, seems likely to supply the defects, which have been experienced in the attempts hitherto made for effecting a *Reformation* of *Manners*: And this naturally leads me to explain, more at large, the peculiar use and excellency of this *Charitable Institution*.

Of all the methods of delivering mankind from *Sin* and *Vice*, and of turning many to *Righteousness*,

no one appears more likely to succeed, than that of bending the minds of Children to the ways of *Virtue*, whilst they are tender and pliable, and not yet infected with habits of *Vice*. To endeavour to turn men from their wicked courses, by reproof, by exhortation, or by the more severe methods of pains and penalties, is, at best, but to apply a remedy to an inveterate disease: Whereas to turn at first the minds and inclinations of Children into the way they should go, is to foresee and prevent the disease itself: It is to write, and imprint the Laws of God on the tables of their hearts, while they are yet white and clean, not sullied by any filth, or pollution contracted from sinful courses; while they are, in a good measure, strangers to the vices of the World; and are put into the surest way to be proof against them by an early prepossession of *Virtue* and *Goodness*. Whereas those, who have not had the happiness of such an education, are sent into the wide World without Principle, or any clear sense of Duty, without Restraint, and without Employment; and, being thus left to themselves, it is easily foreseen into what way the corruption of Nature,

Nature, and the example of a wicked World will quickly carry them*.

Thus far then this Design, by successively mending and improving the rising Generation, appears to be well calculated to bring about, by degrees, a general *Reformation of Manners*; and if we inquire minutely into it, we shall find, that this *Institution* is more likely to effect this salutary Purpose, than the Expedients, which have been ordinarily tried: For it doth not publicly punish Crimes, but directly tends to prevent the commission of them: It doth not harden, or provoke Offenders by pains and penalties, but makes use of milder methods, Instruction and Persuasion: It doth not contend with vitious habits, or inveterate prejudices, but applies itself to Persons, as yet under no wrong or corrupt bias: In a word it doth not endeavour to reclaim

* Account of the Methods, whereby the Charity Schools have been erected and managed, and of the Encouragement given to them.

This Account has been frequently published, and was, for some years, annexed to the Anniversary Sermon.

old

old and hardened Sinners, (an attempt seldom attended with success) but addresses itself to the Young and Innocent, whose minds are susceptible of the best Impressions ; and moreover instructs them in lessons of labour, and industry, which can alone keep the Children of the Poor from falling into extreme want and penury, the great Source of sin and misery in the lower Ranks of Life.

But this *Institution* doth not deserve our attention on these accounts only ; and yet these are advantages of so much real importance, that I might rest the usefulness and expedience of it on them alone, were there not other considerations behind, which, in the presence of this solemn and large *Assembly*, ought not to be passed over in silence. And first then, this Work is a Work of true *Christian Charity*, as it carries in it a general love to Mankind, and a desire to see every one happy and comfortable. It farther claims our regard, as it is a *Charity*, not only to the Body, but the Soul also ; since it doth not only enable the Children, who partake of it, to live comfortably in this World, but prepares them

also to be eternally happy in the next. Another advantageous circumstance is, that there is no kind of *Charity* whatever, *where* so little produces so great effects, as in this way; and *where* these effects are so certain, as very seldom to fail. Lastly, the value of this *Charity* rises still higher, as it doth not only benefit the present Age, but extends it's kind influence to the latest Posterity.

These are all *Topics* of great consequence, and well deserve to be enlarged upon, would the time permit; but it is evident even from the short manner, in which they have been now proposed, that this *Institution*, if properly managed, is likely to introduce a great National Blessing, *Religion* and *Virtue* among the lower Ranks of People: And some part of the time, that remains, cannot be better employed, than in shewing how we may transmit to the Generations to come this Blessing, *pure* and *unmixed*: And, for this purpose, great care ought to be taken, not only, that no principles should be instilled into the Children, who are the objects of this *Institution*, but such, as are sound and good;
but

but also that those be instilled, with the greatest diligence, which are, in their nature, of the greatest and most constant use in the course of a private Life; such as immediately tend to make men serious *Christians*, and peaceable *Subjects*: And above all, that their minds be not tinctured with any new and singular notions, either in *Religion* or *Government*; which would certainly serve no good purpose, and might perhaps divert their minds from more substantial duties and offices, and make them *Proud, Busy, Contentious*.

In Religion there are divers points, which stand at a great distance from the foundations of Christianity; and yet are controverted with as much warmth and zeal, as if the whole *Christian Scheme* were to stand or fall with them; and such controversies, if managed with calmness and decency, may be innocently carried on among learned Men; but are much above the capacity of Children, and generally of their *Instructors* too; and in whose hands therefore they are at best, but idle amusements; and if put into their hands, would probably

lead them into two great *Evils*, namely, To mistake such speculative points for Fundamentals, and To bestow greater zeal upon those, than even upon the Fundamentals themselves.

For these reasons great care ought to be taken to restrain Children from speculative Points of all kinds; and to confine them entirely to such *Doctrines* and *Principles*, as more immediately relate to *Faith*, and a good *Life*, as the only *Doctrines*, which are necessary to Salvation.

And as in Religion, so also in Government, many speculative Points have been raised, concerning the Constitutions of Kingdoms, and the Rights of Princes; and such Questions are generally agitated with a *Design* to breed disturbances in the State, and to perplex the Public Administration. But whatever may be the *Design*, these pernicious effects are commonly produced; especially among the lower Orders of People, who being unable to understand the grounds and reasons of such *Things*, are carried away with words and names, while they remain utter strangers to the real merits of the Cause. By this single *Device*, more than by any
c other,

other, the present Age hath been miserably divided into parties and factions, which have, more than once, brought the Church and State to the very brink of destruction. It may perhaps be, in vain, to hope, that Persons, who have entered deeply into this kind of service, will be persuaded to confine themselves to their own Business, and leave the public Administration to wiser Heads: Yet in order to prevent these mischiefs from descending to our Posterity, it is proper, that the younger Sort should be restrained from such unwarrantable follies: That they should be taught not to speak evil of *Dignities*; but, on the contrary, to reverence *Authority*, and to pay all Duty, Honour, and Obedience to the *Powers, that are*, and this, not only for Conscience-sake, but for the sake of Interest too, as we have no other security under God, for our *Religion* and *Liberties*.

And as this Lesson of reverencing Authority, and leaving the public Administration to the proper Hands, naturally prepares our Youth for another apostolical Rule, *To study to be quiet, and to do their own Business, and to work with their own Hands*;

Hands *; so those two together lay the foundation of a wise, useful, and comfortable Life; of a Life of *Quietness, Peace, and Love.*

And in order to keep such, as are educated in these Schools, stedfast and fixed in their civil and religious principles, nothing can be more advisable, than to put into their hands, at proper seasons, some of those pious and good Books, which by means of that Society †, which takes so laudable a part in this *Day's Solemnity*, may be procured in any number, and at a very easy charge. There is no Duty incumbent on us, as *Christians*, or good *Citizens*, which hath not been considered in one or other of the treatises published by that Society, and always handled in such a way, as to be suited to the meanest capacities. The Public is indebted, for

* 1 Thess. iv. 11.

† The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge together with the Trustees of the Charity-Schools are the Managers of the annual Meetings of the Children educated in the Charity-Schools in and about the Cities of London and Westminster; and at the late Meeting in the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, London, on Thursday the 14th day of June 1792 the Number of the Children, who were assembled, amounted to *seven thousand*, and upwards.

these useful tracts, to some of the brightest Ornaments of our Church ; who, in adapting their discourses to the education and small acquirements of their Readers, have displayed a perfection in writing, not to be attained, but by a clear understanding, and a solid judgment, much improved by long exercise, and an intimate acquaintance with the best and most judicious Authors.

I am well aware, that Some, who do not think fit openly to oppose *Institutions* of this kind, or directly to censure the *Design* of them, would indirectly wound them by insinuating that they are, in great measure, useless and unnecessary, since *Vice* still prevails, though recourse has been had to these *Establishments* to supply, as it were, the defects of other modes of *Reformation*.

Now, whether *Vice* and *Immorality* abound more now, than they did formerly, is not a matter for our present inquiry ; since, whatever is the true state of the case, we may observe, as we did before, that bad as things are, they would certainly have been much worse, if these Schools had not been

erected; and this is so strong an argument for continuing and multiplying them, that a man, who can be against them, must be void of all feeling: And indeed, humanly speaking, what can be so likely to reform the rising Generation, as to educate them in the Principles of *Religion*; to inure them to early habits of *Industry*, and enable them to earn their Bread in an honest and useful Calling? Some, who have been beholden to these Establishments for their education, do, it must be confessed, partly from their own bad dispositions, and partly from the ill examples they had at home, fall off, and sadly disappoint the kind intentions of their Benefactors: But there is reason to believe, that these Instances are not very common: And such as happen to deviate, in this manner, from their Duty, are much more likely to see the error of their ways, to take up, and become at last honest and useful members of Society, than those, who have been never taught at all.

But it is unreasonable to call the utility of *Institutions* of this sort into question, because there still are *Lawless* and *Disobedient*; *Unholy* and *Profane*, as
~~this~~

this *Charity* hath not yet had it's *perfect Work*: For though these Schools have, from their first erection, thriven and increased, till, from low beginnings, they have been advanced to their present height; yet the number of Children educated in them is small in comparison of those, who are not received into them; and the reason, why more are not invited, or *compelled to come in*, is not, because no more are to be found in our streets, but because there is, at present, no provision for more; and when such multitudes of poor Children are still without the means of education, and without employment; void of all knowledge, and sense of duty, and utter strangers to the service and worship of God, is it a matter of wonder, that Vice should appear in a variety of shapes; that there should be *Lawless* and *Disobedient*, *Unholy* and *Profane*?

But if God should be graciously pleased to touch the hearts of all, who are able to contribute to such works of Mercy, and dispose them to aid the pious Managers of *this Charity*, in so bountiful a manner, that provision might be made for the education of *all the Children*, who are proper objects of it; yet

even then the desired *Reformation* would not be effectually brought about; because, it must be remembered, that all our endeavours, though highly useful, are confined to the Children of the poorer People; and therefore, though we should succeed to the utmost of our wishes, we should, I fear, be found to go but a little way, whilst the education of the rest of the Nation is so much neglected. The want of education in *Others* would often obstruct, and sometimes defeat our endeavours. For as long as *Vice* prevails, ill examples, and the temptations to Sin will be so numerous, that the Inferior Sort will not be able to hold out, and persevere in the virtuous conduct they have been taught in these Schools.

Now this is a state of things, which One cannot sufficiently lament; and if it be asked, How it is to be cured, or altered for the better? The Answer is, that Persons of the *middle Order of Life*, as well as Those of *superior Rank*, must not only reform themselves; but must take care also to imprint on their Children such virtuous notions, as may render them good and useful members of Society; and until this

A SERMON PREACHED, &c.

is done, it will be in vain to expect that general *Reformation of Manners*, which is so much talked of by all Pretenders to Piety, so heartily wished by all sincere Christians, and so mightily dreaded by the Enemies of God and Godliness.

But whatever assistance the pious Managers of these *Establishments* may receive, or however their endeavours may be seconded by Others, it must be acknowledged, that *They* have done their parts towards bringing about this most *desirable Event*. They cannot fail therefore of having the Blessings of the Poor; the Applauses of all good Men; the Satisfaction of their own Consciences; and the Divine Favour and Protection, for God *knoweth them, that are his**; and will, in the end, reward their Labour of Love with a blessed and glorious Immortality for the sake, and through the mediation of his beloved Son, our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST; to whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit be ascribed all Honour, Glory, and Power, now and ever.

* 2 Tim. ii. 19.

THE END.

A
S E R M O N

Preached in the CATHEDRAL CHURCH of
ST. PAUL, LONDON:
On THURSDAY, JUNE 6, 1793.

BEING THE TIME
Of the YEARLY MEETING of the
CHILDREN Educated in the CHARITY-
SCHOOLS, in and about the Cities of LONDON
and WESTMINSTER.

BY THE RIGHT REVEREND
SAMUEL, LORD BISHOP OF ST. DAVID'S.

Published at the Request of the SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE,
And the TRUSTEES of the several SCHOOLS.

To which is annexed,
AN ACCOUNT OF THE
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MDCCXCIII.

L U K E IV. 18, 19.

THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BE-
CAUSE HE HATH ANOINTED ME TO PREACH
THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR; HE HATH SENT
ME TO HEAL THE BROKEN-HEARTED, TO
PREACH DELIVERANCE TO THE CAPTIVES,
AND RECOVERING OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND,
TO SET AT LIBERTY THEM THAT ARE
BRUISED, TO PREACH THE ACCEPTABLE
YEAR OF THE LORD.

IT was, as it should seem, upon our Saviour's
first appearance in the Synagogue at Nazareth,
the residence of his family, in the character
of a Public Teacher, that to the astonishment of
that assembly, where he was known only as the
Carpenter's Son, he applied to himself that remark-
able passage of Isaiah, which the evangelist recites
in the words of my text: "This day, said our
Lord, is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." The
phrase,

phrase, "this day," is not, I think, to be understood of that particular sabbath-day, upon which he undertook to expound this prophetic text to the men of Nazareth; nor "your ears," of the ears of the individual congregation, assembled at the time within the walls of that particular synagogue. The expressions are to be taken according to the usual latitude of common speech; "this day," for the whole time of our Lord's appearance in the flesh, or at least for the whole season of his public ministry; and "your ears," for the ears of all you inhabitants of Judæa and Galilee, who now hear my doctrine, and see my miracles. Our Lord affirms, that in his works, and in his daily preaching, his countrymen might discern the full completion of this prophetic text; inasmuch as he was the person, upon whom the Spirit of Jehovah was, whom Jehovah had anointed "to preach the Gospel to the Poor," whom Jehovah had sent "to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the Captives, and recovering of sight to the Blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

None

None but an inattentive reader of the Bible can suppose, that these words were spoken by the prophet Isaiah of himself. Isaiah had a portion, without doubt, but a portion only, of the Divine Spirit. In any sense in which the Spirit of Jehovah was upon the prophet, it was more eminently upon him, who received it not by measure. The prophet Isaiah restored not, that we know, any blind man to his sight; he delivered no captive from his chain. He predicted indeed the restoration of the Jews, from the Babylonian captivity; their final restoration, from their present dispersion; and the restoration of Man, from the worse captivity of Sin. But he never took upon him to proclaim the actual commencement of the season of liberation; which is the thing properly implied, in the phrase of "preaching deliverance to the captives." To the broken-hearted he administered no other balm, than the distant hope of one who, in future times, should bear their sorrows; nor were the Poor, of his own time, particularly interested in his preaching. The characters, therefore, which the speaker seems to assume in this prophetic text, are of two kinds; such as are in no sense answered by any

known circumstance in the life and character of Isaiah, or of any other personage of the ancient Jewish history; but in every sense, literal and figurative, of which the terms are capable, apply to Christ; and such as might in some degree be answered in the Prophet's character, but not otherwise, than as his office bore a subordinate relation to Christ's office, and his predictions to Christ's preaching. It is a thing well known to all, who have been conversant in Isaiah's writings, that many of his prophecies are conceived in the form of dramatic dialogues; in which the usual persons of the sacred piece are God the Father, the Messiah, the Prophet himself, and a Chorus of the Faithful. But it is left to the reader to discover, by the matter spoken, how many of these speakers are introduced, and to which speaker each part of the discourse belongs. It had been reasonable therefore to suppose, that this, like many other passages, is delivered in the person of the Messiah, had our Lord's authority been wanting for the application of the prophecy to himself. Following the express authority of our Lord, in the application of this
prophecy

prophecy to him, we might have spared the use of any other argument, were it not that a new form of Infidelity of late hath reared its hideous head; which carrying on an impious opposition to the genuine Faith, under the pretence of Reformation, in its affected zeal to purge the Christian doctrine of I know not what corruptions, and to restore our creed to what it holds forth as the primitive standard; under that infatuation, which by the just judgment of God ever clings to self-sufficient Folly, pretends to have discovered inaccuracies in our Lord's *own* doctrine, and scruples not to pronounce him, not merely a Man, but a Man peccable and fallible in that degree, as to have misquoted and misapplied the prophecies of the Old Testament. In this instance our great Lord and Master defies the profane censures of the doctors of that impious school. This text, referred to its original place in the Book of Isaiah, is evidently the opening of a prophetic Dialogue; and in the particulars of the character described in it, it carries its own internal evidence of its necessary reference to our Lord, and justifies his application of it to himself:

as will further appear from a more particular exposition.

“ The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,” or, “ over me.” The expression implies a superiority and controul of the Divine Spirit: the Spirit’s government and guidance of the Man, and the Man’s entire submission, in the prosecution of the work he had in hand, to the Spirit’s direction.

“ The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me.”—Under the Law, the three great offices of Prophet, Priest, and King, were conferred by the ceremony of anointing the person. The unction of our Lord was the descent of the Holy Ghost upon him at his Baptism. This was analogous to the ceremony of anointing; as it was a mark publicly exhibited, “ that God had anointed him, to use St. Peter’s expression, with the Holy Ghost and with Power.”

It will seem nothing strange, that Jesus, who was himself God, should derive authority from the
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unction of that Spirit, which, upon other occasions, he is said to give, and that he should be under the Spirit's direction; if it be remembered, that our Lord was as truly Man, as he was truly God. That neither of the two natures was absorbed in the other, but both remained in themselves perfect, notwithstanding the union of the two in one Person. The Divine Word, to which the humanity was united, was not, as some ancient Heretics imagined, instead of a Soul to inform the Body of the Man; for this could not have been without a diminution of the Divinity; which, upon this supposition, must have become obnoxious to all the perturbations of the human Soul;—to the passions of Grief, Fear, Anger, Pity, Joy, Hope, and Disappointment; to all which our Lord, without sin, was liable. The human nature in our Lord was compleat in both its Parts; consisting of a Body and a rational Soul. The rational Soul of our Lord's human nature was a distinct thing from the principle of Divinity, to which it was united; and being so distinct, like the Souls of other men, it owed the right use of its faculties, in the exercise of

them upon religious subjects, and its uncorrupted rectitude of will, to the influence of the Holy Spirit of God. Jesus indeed “was anointed with this holy oil above his fellows,” inasmuch as the intercourse was uninterrupted; the illumination by infinite degrees more full, and the consent and submission, on the part of the Man, more perfect, than in any of the sons of Adam. In so much that he alone of all the human race, by the strength and light imparted from above, was exempt from sin, and rendered superior to temptation. To him the Spirit was given not by measure. The unmeasured infusion of the Spirit into the Redeemer’s soul, was not the Means, but the Effect, of its union to the second Person of the Godhead. An union, of which this had been the means, had differed only in degree from that, which is, in some degree, the privilege of every true believer—which, in an eminent degree, was the privilege of the Apostles, who by the visible descent of the Holy Ghost upon them on the day of pentecost, were in some sort, like their Lord, anointed with the unction from on high. But in
him

him the Natures were united; and the uninterrupted perfect commerce of his human Soul, with the Divine Spirit, was the effect and the privilege of that mysterious conjunction.

“ The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel——”

To preach the Gospel.—The original word, which is expressed in our english Bibles by the word Gospel, signifies *good news*, a joyful message, or glad tidings. And our english word, Gospel, traced to its original in the Teutonic language, is found to carry precisely the same import; being a compound of two words, an adjective signifying *good*, and a substantive which signifies a *tale*, *message*, or *declaration*. But as this signification of the english word, by the general neglect of the parent language, is pretty much forgotten, or remembered only among the Learned; it may give perspicuity to the Text, if for the single word “ Gospel,” we substitute the two words, “ glad tidings.” “ The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
b “ because

“ because he hath anointed me to preach glad
“ tidings to the Poor; he hath sent me to heal
“ the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the
“ Captives, and recovering of sight to the Blind;
“ to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach
“ the acceptable Year of the Lord.”

Our Blessed Lord, in the course of his ministry, restored the sight of the corporeal eye to many, who were literally blind. By his miraculous assistances, in various instances of worldly affliction, far beyond the reach of any human aid, he literally healed the broken heart—As in the instance of Jairus, whose breathless daughter he revived; of the widow of Nain, whose son he restored to her from the coffin; of the family of Lazarus, whom he raised from the grave; of the Syrophœnician woman, whose young daughter he rescued from possession; and of many other sufferers, whose several cases time would fail me to recount. We read not, however, that during his Life on earth, he literally opened the doors of any earthly prison, for the enlargement of the captive, or that, in any instance;

instance, he literally released the Slave or the Convict from the burthen of the galling chain. It is probable, therefore, that all these expressions of the Poor, the Broken-hearted, the Captive, the Blind, and the Bruised, carry something of a mystic meaning, denoting moral disorders and deficiencies under the image of natural calamities and imperfections; and that the various benefits of Redemption are described, under the notion of remedies applied to those natural afflictions and distempers. In this figurative sense the Poor are not those, who are destitute of this world's riches; but those, who before our Lord's appearance in the flesh, were poor in religious treasure; without any clear knowledge of the true God, of their own duty here, and of their hope hereafter; the whole Heathen World, destitute of the light of Revelation. To them our Lord preached the glad tidings of Life, and Immortality. The Broken-hearted are Sinners, not hardened in their sins, but desponding under a sense of guilt, without a hope of expiation. These broken hearts the Redeemer healed, by making the atonement, and by declaring

the means and the terms of Reconciliation. The Captives are they, who were in bondage to the law of Sin, domineering in their members, and overpowering the will of the conscience and the rational faculty. The Blind are the devout, but erring Jews of our Lord's days; blind to the spiritual sense of the symbols of their ritual Law. The Bruised are the same Jews, bruised in their consciences by the galling fetters of a Religion of external ordinances; whom our Lord released, by the promulgation of his perfect law of Liberty. But notwithstanding that the expressions in my text may easily bear, and in the intention of the inspiring Spirit, certainly, I think, involved this mystic meaning; yet since the prophecy, in some of these particulars, had a literal accomplishment in our Lord's miracles, the literal meaning is by no means to be excluded. Indeed, when of both meanings of a prophet's phrase, the literal and the figurative, either seems clearly and equally admissible, the true rule of interpretation seems to be, that the phrase is to be understood in both. This seems a clear conclusion from the very nature of our Lord's miracles.

miracles; which, for the most part, were actions distinctly symbolical of one or other of the spiritual benefits of the Redemption; as such, they were literal completions of the prophecies, taking the place, as it were, of the prophecies so completed, pointing to another latent meaning, and to a higher completion; and thus forming a strict and wonderful union between the Letter and the Spirit of the prophetic language.

This text is not the only passage in the prophetic writings, in which the preaching of glad tidings to the Poor is mentioned, as a principal branch of the Messiah's office. That in the exposition of these prophecies, the figurative sense of the expression is not to exclude the literal, is evident from this consideration,—that the discoveries of the Christian Revelation are in fact emphatically glad tidings to the Poor; in the literal acceptance of the word; to those who are destitute of worldly riches. To those, who from their present condition, might be likely to think themselves forsaken of their Maker; to doubt, whether they

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existed for any other purpose, than to minister to the superfluous enjoyments of the higher ranks of society, by the severity of their own toil: To persons in this low condition, and under these gloomy apprehensions, was it not glad tidings to be told, that they had a Hope, beyond the Infidel's expectation, of a perpetual cessation of sorrow in the grave? Hope of a day, when all shall rise, to meet before the common Lord, High and Low, Rich and Poor, one with another! When without regard to the distinctions of this transitory Life, each man shall receive his proper portion of Honour or Shame, Enjoyment or Misery, according to the degree of his moral and religious worth! That he, whose humble station excluded him, in this Life, from the society and the pleasures of the Great, (now fallen from their Greatness) shall become the Companion and the Fellow of Angels and of glorified Saints! Shall stand for ever in the Presence of his Redeemer and his God, and partake of the pleasures which are at God's right hand!

Again,

Again, the discoveries of Christianity were made in a manner the most suited to popular apprehension; and, for that reason, they were emphatically glad tidings to the Poor. Its duties are not delivered in a system, built on abstract notions of the eternal fitness of Things; of the Useful and the Fair; notions, not void of truth, but intelligible only to minds highly improved by long habits of study and reflection. In the Gospel, the duties of Man are laid down in short, perspicuous, comprehensive precepts, delivered as the commands of God, under the awful sanctions of eternal rewards and punishments. The doctrines of the Christian Revelation are not encumbered with a long train of argumentative proof; which is apt to bewilder the Vulgar, no less than it gratifies the Learned; they are propounded to the Faith of all, upon the authority of a teacher, who came down from Heaven, "to speak what he knew, and testify what he had seen."

Again, the Poor are they, on whom the Christian doctrine would most readily take effect. Christ's

atonement, it is true, hath been made for all. The benefits of Redemption are no less common to all ranks of Society, than to all nations of the world; and upon this ground, the first news of the Saviour's birth was justly called, by the angels who proclaimed it, "Glad tidings of great Joy which should be to all People." Every situation of Life hath its proper temptations, and its proper duties; and with the aids which the Gospel offers, the temptations of all situations are equally surmountable, and the duties equally within the power of the Believer's improved strength. It were a derogation from the greatness of our Lord's work, to suppose, that, with an equal strength of religious principle once formed, the attainment of salvation should be more precarious in any one rank of Life, than in another. But if we consider the different ranks of men, not as equally religious, but as equally without religion which was the deplorable situation of the world, when Christianity made its first appearance, the Poor were the class of men, among whom the new doctrine was likely to be, and actually was, in the first instance

instance, the most efficacious. The riches of the world, and the gratifications they afford, are too apt, when their evil tendency is not opposed by a principle of religion, to beget that friendship for the world, which is enmity with God. The Poor, on the other hand, excluded from the hope of worldly pleasure, were likely to listen, with the more attention, to the promise of a distant happiness; and, exposed to much actual suffering here, they would naturally be the most alarmed with the apprehension of continued and increased suffering in another world. For this third reason, the Gospel, upon its first publication, was emphatically “glad tidings to the Poor.”

From these three considerations, that the Gospel, in the matter, in the manner of the discovery, and in its relation to the state of mankind at the time of its publication, was in fact, in a peculiar sense, “glad tidings to the Poor:” the conclusion seems just and inevitable, that in my text, and in other passages of a like purport, the Prophets describe the Poor, in the literal acceptation of the

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word,

word, as especial objects of the Divine mercy in the Christian dispensation. And this sense of such prophecies, which so much claims the attention both of Rich. and Poor, receives a further confirmation from our Lord's appeal to his open practice of preaching to the Poor, as an evidence to his contemporaries, of his Divine mission. "Go ye," he said to the Baptist's messengers; "and shew John again those things, which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM." Here, "the preaching of the Gospel to the Poor" is mentioned by our Lord among the circumstances of his ministry, which so evidently corresponded with the prophecies of the Messiah, as to render any more explicit answer, to the Baptist's enquiries, unnecessary. This therefore must be a preaching of the Gospel to the Poor literally; for the preaching of it to the figurative Poor, the Poor in religious knowledge, to the Heathen world, commenced not during our Lord's life on earth, and could not

be alledged by him, at that time, among his own personal exhibitions of the prophetical characters of the Messiah of the Jews.

Assuredly therefore our Lord came "to preach glad tidings to the Poor." "To preach glad tidings to the Poor" was mentioned by the Prophets, as one of the especial objects of his coming. To preach to them he cloathed himself with flesh, and, in his human nature, received the unction of the Spirit. And since the example of our Lord is, in every particular in which it is at all imitable, a rule to our conduct; it is clearly our duty, as the humble followers of our merciful Lord, to entertain a special regard for the religious interests of the Poor, and to take care, what we can, that the Gospel be still preached to them. And the most effectual means of preaching the Gospel to the Poor, is by charitable provisions for the religious education of their children.

Blessed be God, institutions for this pious purpose abound in most parts of the kingdom. The

authority of our Lord's example, of preaching to the Poor, will, with every serious believer, outweigh the objection, which hath been raised against these charitable institutions, by a mean and dastardly policy, imbibed in foreign climes; nor less unchristian, than it is inconsistent with the genuine feelings of the home-bred Briton: a policy, which pretends to foresee, that, by the advantages of a religious education, the Poor may be raised above the laborious duties of his station, and his use in civil life be lost. Our Lord and his Apostles better understood the interests of society, and were more tender of its security and peace, than many perhaps of our modern theorists. Our Lord and his Apostles certainly never saw this danger; that the improvement of the Poor, in religious knowledge, might be a means of confounding civil subordination. They were never apprehensive, that the Poor would be made the worse Servants, by an education which should teach them to serve their Masters upon earth, from a principle of duty to the great Master of the whole family in Heaven. These mean suggestions, of a wicked policy, are indeed contradicted

tradicted by the experience of mankind. The extreme condition of oppression and abasement, the unnatural condition of Slavery, produced, in ancient times, its Poets, Philosophers, and Moralists. Imagine not, that I would teach you to infer, that the condition of slavery is not adverse to the improvement of the human character. Its natural tendency is certainly to fetter the genius, and debase the heart. But some brave spirits, of uncommon strength, have, at different times, surmounted the disadvantages of that dismal situation. And the fact, which I would offer to your attention, is this ; that these men, eminent in taste and literature, were not rendered, by those accomplishments, the less profitable slaves. Where then is the danger, that the free-born Poor, of this country, should be the worse hired servants, for a proficiency in a knowledge, by which both Master and Servant are taught their respective duties, by which alone either Rich or Poor may be made wise unto salvation ?

Much serious consideration would indeed be due to the objection, were it the object, or the ordinary

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and probable effect, of these charitable seminaries for the maintenance and education of the infant Poor, to qualify them for the occupations and pursuits of the higher ranks of society, or to give them a relish for their pleasures and amusements. But this is not the case. Nothing more is attempted, nor can more indeed be done, than to give them that instruction, in the doctrines and duties of religion, to which a claim of common right is in some sort constituted, in a Christian country, by the mere capacity to profit by it; and to furnish them with those first rudiments, of what may be called the trivial literature of their mother tongue, without which they would scarce be qualified to be subjects, even of the lowest class, of the free government under which they are born. A government, in which the meanest citizen, the very mendicant at your doors, unless his life, or his franchises, have been forfeited by crime to public justice, hath his birthrights, and is entrusted with a considerable share of the management of himself. It is the peculiarity, and this peculiarity is the principal excellence, of such governments, that as

the Great have no property in the labour of the Poor, other than what is acquired for a time by a mutual agreement; the poor man, on the other hand, hath no claim upon his superior, for support and maintenance, except under some particular covenant; as an apprentice, a journeyman, a menial servant, or a labourer; which entitles him to the recompence of his stipulated service, and to nothing else. It follows, that, in such states, every man is to derive a support, for himself and his family, from the voluntary exertions of his own industry, under the direction of his own genius, his own prudence, and his own conscience. Hence, in these free governments, some considerable improvement of the understanding is necessary, even for the lowest orders of the people; and much strength of religious principle is requisite, to govern the individual in those common concerns of his private life, in which the laws leave the meanest subject, equally with his betters, master of himself. Despotism, sincere, unalloyed, rigid Despotism, is the only form of government, which may, with safety to itself, neglect the education of its infant Poor. Where it is the principle.

ciple of government, that the common people are to be ruled as mere animals ; it might indeed be impolitic, to suffer them to acquire the moral discernment, and the spontaneity, of men. But in free states, whether monarchical, or of whatever form, the case is exactly the reverse. The schemes of Providence and Nature are too deeply laid, to be overthrown by man's impolicy. It is contrary to the order of Nature, it is repugnant to the decrees of Providence, and therefore the thing shall never be, that civil liberty should long maintain its ground, among any people disqualified, by ignorance and profligacy, for the use and enjoyment of it. Hence the greatest danger threatens every free constitution, when, by a neglect of a due culture of the infant mind, barbarism and irreligion are suffered to overrun the lower orders. The barriers, which civilized manners naturally oppose, against the encroachments of power on the one hand, and the exorbitance of licentiousness, on the other, will soon be borne down, and the government will degenerate either into an absolute despotic monarchy, or what a subsisting example proves to be by infinite degrees

degrees a heavier curse, the capricious domination of an unprincipled rabble. Thus would ignorance and irreligion, were they once to prevail generally in the lower ranks of society, necessarily terminate in one, or the other, of these two dreadful evils; the dissolution of all government, or the enslaving of the majority of mankind: while true Religion, on the contrary, is the best support of every government, which, being founded on just principles, proposes for its end the joint advancement of the virtue and the happiness of the people; and, by necessary consequence, co-operates with Religion, in the two great purposes, of exalting the general character, and of bettering the general condition of Man. Of every such government Christianity, by consent and concurrence in a common end, is the natural friend and ally: at the same time that, by its silent influence on the hearts of men, it affords the best security for the permanence of that degree of orderly definite liberty, which is an essential principle in every such constitution. The Christian Religion fosters and protects such Liberty, not by supporting the absurd and pernicious doctrine

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trine of the natural equality of men : Not by asserting that sovereignty is originally in the multitude, and that Kings are the servants of their people : Not by releasing the conscience of the subject from the obligations of Loyalty, in every supposed case of the Sovereign's misconduct, and maintaining what, in the new vocabulary of modern Democracy, is named *the sacred right of insurrection* : Not by all, or by any, of these detestable maxims—maxims fit only for the counsels of Hell, where they were hatched, and for the FRENCH CONVENTION which adopts them—Not by these maxims, Christianity supports that rational Liberty, which she approves and cherishes ; but by planting in the breast of the individual powerful principles of self-government, which render greater degrees of civil freedom consistent with the public safety.

The Patrons therefore of these beneficent institutions, in which the children of the Poor are trained in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, have no reason to apprehend, that true Policy will disapprove the pious work, which Charity hath suggested.

suggested. Thousands of children, of both sexes, annually rescued by means of these charitable seminaries, in various parts of the kingdom, from beggary, ignorance, and vice, are gained as useful citizens to the state, at the same time that they are preserved as sheep of Christ's fold. Fear not therefore to indulge the feelings of benevolence and charity, which this day's spectacle awakens in your bosoms.

It is no weakness to sympathize in the real hardships of the inferior orders. It is no weakness to be touched with an anxiety for their welfare, to feel a complacency and holy joy, in the reflection, that, by the well directed exertions of a godly charity, their interests, secular and eternal, are secured. It is no weakness to rejoice, that, without breaking the order of society, Religion can relieve the condition of poverty from the greatest of its evils, from ignorance and vice. It is no weakness to be liberal of your worldly treasures, in contribution to so good a purpose. The Angels in Heaven participate these holy feelings. Our Father which is in heaven accepts and will reward the work ; provided

vided it be well done, in the true spirit of Faith and Charity. For of such as These—as These who stand before you—arrayed in the simplicity and innocence of Childhood—in the humility of Poverty—of such as These—it was our Lord's express and solemn declaration—of Such is the Kingdom of God!

A
S E R M O N

Preached in the CATHEDRAL CHURCH of
ST. PAUL, LONDON:
On THURSDAY, MAY 28, 1795.

BEING THE TIME
Of the YEARLY MEETING of the
CHILDREN Educated in the CHARITY-
SCHOOLS, in and about the Cities of LONDON
and WESTMINSTER.

By THE RIGHT REVEREND
HENRY, LORD BISHOP OF BRISTOL.

Published at the Request of the SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE,
And the TRUSTEES of the several SCHOOLS.

To which is annexed,
AN ACCOUNT OF THE
SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

L O N D O N :

Printed by ANN RIVINGTON, PRINTER TO THE SAID
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PROV. XIX. 2.

ALSO THAT THE SOUL BE WITHOUT KNOW-
LEGE, IT IS NOT GOOD; AND HE THAT
HASTETH WITH HIS FEET, STUMBLETH.

THE Text, according to this translation, is divided into two branches, expressing, the ill effects, first, of Ignorance, secondly, of Want of Deliberation. And this seems more consonant to the usual method of these writings, than the other interpretation which includes the whole in one sentiment; namely, a comparison between the precipitancy of a man running hastily and incautiously along, without any observation of the impediments that lie in his way, or any regard to his steps, and the effect of a blind and careless ignorance in the conduct of life.

These two interpretations however mutually illustrate each other, and serve to establish the general principle of the necessity of knowledge or information.

This necessity arises from the nature and constitution of man. Born as he is with the seeds and principles of knowledge, or at least provided with inlets through which he must necessarily and unavoidably imbibe them, it can never be intended that they should be stifled as it were in their birth, instead of being ripened into any degree of maturity. Every thing about him indicates a state of continual progression; the increase of his growth, the developement of his bodily faculties, and the gradual improvement of his organs of sense. Can we suppose then that the mind is to remain in a torpid state, without making at least an equal progress and advance? Indeed so intimate is the connection between body and mind, that the progress of the one will to a certain degree necessarily accompany the progress of the other. As the body increases in health and strength, and the organs acquire

acquire a degree of firmness, it is impossible but some information must find its way into the mind. The objects around us will necessarily make some impression, which in its turn will produce certain workings of the intellect upon them. Experience will teach us to associate certain ideas, to compare them, and draw conclusions from them. But as a due portion of food and exercise are necessary to the health of the body, so also without proper culture and attention, the powers of the mind will flag, and carry us but a little way. Nor is this attention necessary merely to the acquisition of knowledge, but as appears from the text, in which the necessity of it is coupled with that of deliberation, is requisite also to the proper direction of it. It becomes therefore an interesting inquiry, how knowledge is to be obtained ; what degree of it is necessary ; and what is the proper use and application of it.

In the pursuit of this inquiry we are naturally led to that social principle which forms a part of the constitution of man. For although nature has

provided that the first rudiments of knowlege should be imbibed without any exertion of our own, and with little or no assistance from others, yet our stock will remain very scanty and deficient without the guidance of some more experienced and assisting hand. The communication therefore of useful knowledge, is one of the principal acts of benevolence which men can exercise towards each other; and as such, must be one of the principal obligations of duty imposed upon them by their mutual relation.

It appears then that knowlege is acquired partly from the objects without us, presenting themselves to our senses, and the consequent operations of our mind upon them, and partly from the communication of our fellow-creatures. And it is evident that there are some branches of knowlege which must depend wholly on that communication; such as the history of past events, and the transactions of former times, which can only be conveyed to us either by written records or oral tradition handed down from our forefathers. The opportunities and the necessity

necessity of these communications must vary according to circumstances: So very different are the situations of the different people scattered over the face of the habitable world in respect of manners, customs, and habits of living, that the same measure of instruction cannot be measured out to them all; it must be adapted both to their wants and their capacities; and in some cases perhaps must be limited by their mode of life, and the necessity they are under of paying the principal attention to the cultivation of bodily strength and activity. The same elegant arts which serve to embellish and adorn life among the inhabitants of polished empires, would be either troublesome impediments, or at least useless ornaments among the wilder inmates of uncultivated states. And so great are the abuses and corruptions which have always accompanied the refinements of a more civilized stage of society, that it has been matter of doubt to which of these states the preference is due. The comparison indeed must not be made with those nations who are immersed in the grossest ignorance and barbarity, and overwhelmed at once with all the impu-

rities of fanaticism and idolatry ; we cannot but indulge a confident hope that it is in the councils of the Almighty to bring them out of this miserable state to the light of science and true religion. But the comparison, if made at all, must be made with those who are not destitute of the comforts and conveniencies of life ; who have some settled and regular polity ; some and perhaps pretty strong principles of justice, honor, and other moral virtues ; and whose deficiency in religious knowledge is perhaps partly compensated by their ignorance of those vices which prevailed among the nations to whom the Saviour of the world was more immediately sent. Whether these people, if any such are now to be found, are in their progress to another state of society, in which they may experience both the benefits and dangers of an higher civilization, and among the former may ultimately become intitled to partake of the Covenant of Grace ; or whether they are intended by the Creator to stand separate and distinct, and therefore to be judged only by the uncovenanted mercies of God, we presume not to determine. So far however we may at least venture, that wherever we see

the prevalence of gross vice and brutish ignorance, we cannot be out of the line of our duty, in any endeavours we can exert to remove them, and introduce a better mind in their stead. And in proportion to the difficulties and discouragements which usually attend such an attempt, the more laudable and disinterested must the endeavour be esteemed. Much indeed is it to be wished, that the ardor of zeal which is necessary to stimulate to such undertakings, should always be tempered with discretion; that the good seed should be sown with due care and preparation, and the produce watched with diligence and perseverance; since it is only by such means as these that any hope can be entertained of its yielding fruit to perfection.

With better prospects may this zeal and this vigilance be applied to those, who being born with the same advantages as ourselves are in want only of the same opportunities of improving them. Here indeed a field is opened to the gratification of our best affections by contributing, according to our respective means, to the improvement and happiness

piners of our fellow-creatures: and equally thankful ought those to be who have the power to afford salutary instruction, with those who have the good fortune to receive it.

It is true indeed that in the exercise of this power in general, namely, the communication of knowledge, there ought to be a discretion arising from the circumstances under which it is made, and from a due consideration of the proper use to which it should be applied; lest by a precipitate and ill-managed instruction, we should fall short of the desired effect. Nor is the danger confined to that alone. So prone are we to abuse the best gifts, that even that knowledge which ought to be the foundation of our virtue and happiness, is too frequently rendered the instrument of corruption and vice. This being the case, it is evident, that as infinite good may be done by the diligent communication and the attentive reception of useful knowledge, so likewise may infinite mischief ensue, from the dissemination of false and delusive instruction. We indeed unto those by whom the offence cometh, and
6 who

who are chargeable with the crime of thus wilfully corrupting the fountain of good, and changing the medicine of the soul into poison ! But from these considerations a new duty will arise to those who are actuated by a benevolent desire to promote the welfare of their fellow-creatures ; namely, to guard against and counteract the abuse of knowledge which may take place in unprepared minds from the insidious endeavours of such as wish to mislead them. And this consideration will perhaps supply us with the best answer to those who are disposed to restrain the communication of knowledge to such alone as can enjoy leisure to pursue it. Not indeed that I am disposed to admit the proposition that ignorance is the best security for obedience, or that a life of toil and labor is incompatible with a reasonable degree of information, on subjects with which it most behoves us all to be acquainted. Very erroneous and ill-applied must that knowledge be, which can relax the nerves of industry, or loosen the obligations of duty ; and if unfortunately this has sometimes been the case, it seems that the remedy should lie, not in brutish
b ignorance,

ignorance, but in more correct instruction. But whatever speculative opinion may be entertained upon this head, the question appears to have received a sufficient decision in practice, from the natural and necessary progress of human affairs; which how slow soever in its operation, yet gradually tends to diffuse light and knowledge in some shape or other through the different orders of society. Without adverting therefore to the injustice of attempting to keep the common people in ignorance, the bad policy of such a measure must increase in proportion as a country advances in civilization and refinement. The "children of this world," usually more active, as well as "wiser in their generation than the children of light," will avail themselves of every mean to corrupt and mislead the public mind, in order to warp it to their wicked purposes, unless their design be counteracted by sound and useful cultivation. Never perhaps was this observation more fully justified than in this age and country. It is incredible what pains have been taken to circulate pernicious doctrines and opinions purposely adapted to the level of the common people. God

be thanked ! care has not now been wanting on the other side ; and we may flatter ourselves with a prospect that by the blessing of God on the pious labors of well-disposed persons, a seasonable antidote may have been found for the poison which has so long been spreading through the community.

It is evident however that the end cannot be effectually answered, unless some foundation of good habits and good principles has been laid in early age ; which may afford strength to resist for a while the artifices of insidious sophistry ; or at least prevent the mind from being open to every attack which can be made upon it. Such, among others, has been a principal object of the laudable endeavours of that Society, whose cause I am now called upon to plead, from the earliest period of its institution.

To impress the mind of youth, even in the lowest orders of society, with the first principles of morality and religion ; to teach them the foundations of their duty to God and Man, and at the

same time to inure them to the practice of it ; not, as the adversary has sometimes falsely reproached us, by this instruction withdrawing them from their proper sphere of life, but affording them the best assistance and direction for their conduct in it ; this is properly to “ train up a child in the way he should go,” and to secure the best chance which the state of human affairs will permit, that “ in the end he will not utterly depart from it.”

If however the “ overflowings of ungodliness should lead us to fear that the effect of these endeavours has not been answerable to our wishes, let us remember that, virtue, morality, and good order, are in their nature less prominent, and less apt to meet the public eye, than their contraries are ; and that the good consequences thereof arising from the labors of love, are to be estimated from the silent and almost imperceptible check given to that wickedness which would otherwise be triumphant in the world. Nor yet, we trust, will there be wanting to an accurate observer many indications calculated to animate zeal and encourage

rage perseverance in well-doing; and while we contemplate with joy and satisfaction the awful and interesting spectacle which is now again before us, we may still indulge the pleasing hope that no small benefit may accrue in future both to the individuals and the public, from the institutions which bring us together.

With similar, but with more distant hopes, may we look to the pious attempts of this Society, in conjunction with another more peculiarly set apart for that purpose, in diffusing the light of the gospel where it was hitherto unknown, and publishing the glad tidings of Salvation in the remotest corners of the earth. And while their care is thus continued to extend the knowledge of Christ in distant regions, the increasing resources of the Society have with equal attention been applied to facilitate the opportunities of his worship at home. And we trust that in proportion as the means are supplied by the pious liberality of those who wish to encourage our designs, new channels will be opened and new methods suggested of making
7 known

known the “ways of God upon earth, his saving health among all nations.”

At a time when not only the nations of Europe, as has too often been the case, are armed against each other, and wars and fightings are heard among them; but when new and unprecedented attacks have been made by one overbearing state upon the liberties, the peace, and good order of every other; when, under the pretence of stripping off the trappings of superstition, and reforming some abuses which may have crept into the administration of the church, we have seen the standard of atheism publicly and avowedly raised, and every hope of pardon to the sinner, or recompence to the wretched in another life, disappointed and removed; under circumstances like these, it is a comfortable reflection which the present solemnity affords, that many at least in this country are still occupied in better views; that we do not desert the cause of civil and religious order; or forbear to train up the rising generation in those principles and habits, which will tend to make them good and useful.

members of society, and to secure their present and future happiness.

May that God, who giveth the increase to the mental as well as the earthly harvest, dispose them to profit by the advantages they enjoy ; may he be pleased to render them the means of preserving his worship in a sinful world ; and supporting them by his Holy Spirit through the conflicts of the flesh, may he so conduct them through things temporal, that they finally lose not the things eternal !

A
S E R M O N
PREACHED before the
S O C I E T Y

Corresponding with the *Incorporated Society in*
DUBLIN, for promoting *English Protestant*
Working-Schools in Ireland,

At their General Meeting in the Parish-Church of
St Mary le Bow, on *Wednesday, May 19, 1773.*

By the Right Reverend
ROBERT, Lord Bishop of OXFORD.



L O N D O N :

Printed and Sold by J. and W. OLIVER, Printers to the
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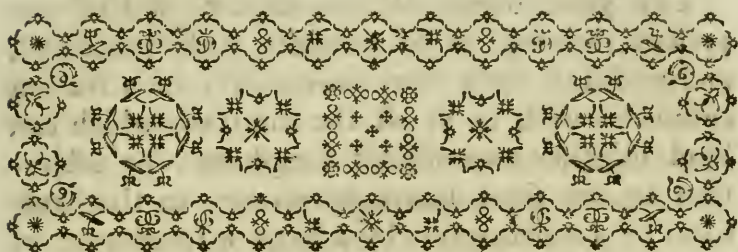
Bow Vestry,

Wednesday,
May 19, 1773.

*At a General Meeting of the Society corresponding
with The Incorporated Society in DUBLIN, for
promoting English Protestant Working-Schools
in Ireland :*

AGREED, That the Thanks of this Society be given to the Right Reverend ROBERT Lord Bishop of OXFORD, for his excellent Sermon preached this Day before the Society, and that his Lordship be desired to permit the Society to print the same.

WILLIAM ODDY,
Secretary.



ROMANS XII. II.

NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS; FERVENT IN
SPIRIT; SERVING THE LORD.



Diligent performance of our duty in respect to ourselves and others in that station of life, in which the divine providence hath placed us; and a serious attention to the worship of our Creator, animated with a well informed and a well tempered zeal; both alike founded, not only on a conviction of the reasonableness, utility, and moral obligation of these duties considered in themselves, but on a regard also to the commands of our only Lord and Master JESUS CHRIST, who hath expressly required them at our hands: These form the principal outlines of the character of a good Citizen and a good Christian.

THE great object of this Society, and of our present meeting, is to promote these principles, and to diffuse them more universally, in a Nation connected with us by all the charities, which can bind together two distinct kingdoms; by subjection to the same sovereign power, to the same form of government; by a large intermixture of interests, of property, and even of blood; by every conciliating intercourse, by every endearing relation; to awaken the Native Irish of the lower rank out of that torpid state, in which their prejudices have so long held them; to call them forth, or by degrees at least to lead them, from barbarism to civility, from darkness to light, from bigotry to religion, from a slavish subjection to their priests, and an abject vassalage to the Pope, to the glorious liberty of the Gospel; that they may become useful to themselves and to the community, good subjects, rational Christians, real Catholics, servants of God alone, and freemen of CHRIST. And these ends we are urged to pursue, in consideration of our own as well as of their interests; by every motive whether private or public, whether prudential or charitable, whether political or religious.

THAT the native Irish, so closely connected with England, should have continued for so many centuries, -

centuries, and should in some degree still continue, in such a state of darkness and barbarism, might seem incredible and inexplicable, were not the fact evident, and did not history point out to us the causes of it.

THE fate of that nation has been somewhat singular, and the disadvantages, under which it has laboured, in a manner peculiar to itself. No time can be assigned within the period of certain history, in which Ireland had any favourable opportunity of making those improvements, which its natural capacity admitted, or its happy situation even pointed out. As it escaped the dominion of the Romans, so was it likewise deprived of the benefits, which their government generally introduced; order, laws, civility, cultivation: and being separated from other nations in a remote corner of the then known world, and unskilled in navigation, it had little inclination or opportunity to profit by intercourse with them.

WE have indeed notices from undoubted history of a subsequent age, in which Ireland was celebrated for Literature and Sanctity. Learning, driven out of the rest of Europe, by the incursion of the Northern nations, seemed for a while to take refuge there; and from thence Letters and Religion were propagated to the neighbouring countries. But this bright age was of no long continuance:

continuance : the light of it was soon obscured, and at last utterly extinguished, by repeated invasions of still more northern barbarians. And it must also be observed, that their Learning at best was such as could only have shined in dark times ; and that their Religion consisted chiefly in the extravagant austerities of the monastic life, unfavourable to improvement of every kind, as it encouraged and sanctified inactivity, and considered the cultivation of the arts of civil life as profane, and even sinful.

WHATEVER their former attainments might have been, the English certainly found them relapsed into a state of extreme barbarism, in respect of science, manners, laws, and religion ; without arts, without manufactures, and almost without agriculture, that first mark, and most essential part of civilisation ; in a country eminently fruitful, and abundantly supplied with every thing proper for the accommodation of its inhabitants, in a manner destitute of the conveniencies and even the necessaries of life. To this state they were reduced by a perpetual succession of domestic wars, between their several elective kings, under whom they were cantoned ; and of foreign invasions, to which they lay entirely open and exposed : and whatever short intervals there might be of either, public depredation only gave place to pri-

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vate rapine; and military law was only exchanged for tyranny or anarchy. Nor was their condition mended, when their dissensions had thrown them into the hands of the English: the same series of contentions, either among themselves, or with their invaders, succeeded. In despite of many solemn acts of forced and insincere submission, they perpetually revolted against an ill established and ill supported, a weak and unsteady government; the effect of which was little more than to keep up their resentment against their new governors ever fresh and keen, and to mature it at length into an inveterate hatred.

THUS for many centuries this unfortunate nation laboured under all the disadvantages of subjection to a superior power; without partaking of any of the advantages, with which it is often accompanied. The conquerors even refused to impart the benefit and protection of their laws to the conquered. Unable to reduce them to order by force, they would not condescend to try the gentle but more powerful influence of benevolence; and, instead of reforming the natives, suffered even their own people, settled among them, to degenerate and become barbarians. The condition of the times, the manners of the people, were unfavourable to every kind of civil improvement. Those, who are accustomed to live by rapine and
plunder,

plunder, always look upon manual labour, and the arts that depend on it, with contempt and aversion; and who, in a state of civil confusion, will bestow his pains, the fruits of which he can have no reasonable expectation of enjoying? Their very laws were calculated to extinguish every inclination to industry, by affording no security in the possession of property, nor certainty of its descending by inheritance.

WHEN the light of the Gospel was relumined by the Reformation, the same pillar of fire, which gave a guiding light to England, became a cloud and darkness to the Irish; making a still greater separation between both, so that one came not near the other. The reception of it by the former, was of itself a sufficient reason for its being rejected by the latter. It threw them more irrecoverably into the arms of Rome; and made them seek alliances with every Popish nation, that could flatter them with promises of protection. These connexions, formed so long ago, still subsist: hence the constant supplies, which they afford to foreign armies; doubly destructive to their country, as they diminish its force, and at the same time increase the strength of its enemies. The next age was unhappily distinguished by discord and devastation, more violent, and more general; by rebellions and massacres; by civil wars inflamed

inflamed and heightened with religious fury ; rendering ineffectual every approach, which had before been made, to order and government ; imbittering and confirming old animosities, aggravating antient prejudices, and rendering them invincible.

THE great era of British Liberty, the Revolution, marks the commencement of peace and prosperity to Ireland, after at least nine centuries of uninterrupted discord, confusion, and desolation. The way to happiness was then laid plainly open : but in so long a course of time, as hath passed since, what advances have been made towards it ? Much less, than in reason might have been expected ; even allowing to every obviating cause its full efficacy. Barbarism hath retreated with a slow pace : some remains of it at least still appear in the manners of the people, by its genuine marks, ferocity and indolence : outrageous acts of lawless violence, unheard of in any civilised country, are still frequently committed there ; and hardly any other country bears on the face of it such plain indications of the bounty of God in imparting the gifts of nature, and of the sloth of man in neglecting to improve them.

POPERY, that more than Egyptian darkness, still covers the greater part of the land ; a darkness, which may be sensibly felt in its pernicious effects and destructive consequences. It is the great obstacle, that stands in the way of every bene-

ficial, every generous, design : it counteracts every principle, that leads to loyalty and true piety, to industry and useful knowledge, to national strength, security, and happiness. It inspires its wretched votaries with a detestation of that government which protects them, because it is administered by those whom they call Usurpers and Heretics ; and makes them ready to join the enemies of their country, because they call themselves Catholics ; a name perverted in the application to the very contrary of its true meaning. The love of their country being thus extinguished in their breasts, one of the strongest incitements to the noblest exertions of the powers of body and mind is destroyed. Their understanding, subdued to the belief of gross falsehoods, and habituated to absurdities, is weakened and depraved ; it becomes impervious to the light of truth, and callous to the force of argument. Intrenched in ignorance, and in a language of their own, little known to others, and difficult to be attained ; enslaved to the peculiar customs and superstitions of their ancestors ; fixed in an obstinate adherence to hereditary errors, and a determined hatred of those, whose duty it is to remove them ; awed by the terrors of dreadful anathemas, and (in the case of Converts at least) by the obligation of oaths *, binding them not to
hearken

* Pontificale Rom. Ordo ad reconciliand. Apostatam, Schismaticum, vel Hæreticum.

hearken to reason, or yield to conviction ; they render themselves inaccessible to human instruction, and give up their claim to the direction of the word of God : “ Seeing they see not, neither do they perceive ; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. The heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed ; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted and healed.”

EVERY ordinary remedy therefore having been found inadequate to the cure of this inveterate evil, recourse was had to the Design of erecting English Protestant Schools in Ireland, “ wherein the Children of Popish and other poor Natives of that Kingdom might be instructed in the English Tongue, and in the Principles of true Religion and Loyalty, and trained up to the practice of Industry and Labour :” a Design established by the sanction of Royal Authority, and carried on by this Society under the protection and support of Royal and Parliamentary patronage.

THE wisdom and justice, the utility and importance, of this Design, and the means of promoting it, the present occasion requires, that I should briefly propose to your consideration.

IT is of the utmost importance to the well being of every Community, that proper care be taken of the rising generation ; that children be brought up in principles of Religion and Virtue ; to habits of piety, honesty, sobriety, and industry ; that they may become good men, and good citizens. This care is necessary in all cases, and even in the most favourable circumstances : should they be abandoned to neglect, the consequence will be, not only that ignorance and sloth will take possession of them, but a large train also of concomitant vices will enter in and dwell there, and make them wretched in themselves, injurious to their neighbours, and mischievous to mankind. But much more is this care necessary, when there is great and apparent hazard of their being corrupted and perverted to evil : where they are peculiarly exposed to the influence of error and superstition, to the infusion of bad principles and bad habits ; where there is evident danger of their being made, not only useless, but pernicious, members of society ; not only bad subjects, but even enemies to their country. From these considerations therefore, the attention of the wisest Legislators hath been justly engaged to provide for the proper education of children ; to direct the general plan of it ; and in some degree to controul the will of private persons in so important a public concern. How far
children

children belong to the community, and are properly the children of the State; so that they may be taken into the care of the magistrate, even against the will and consent of the parents, is a question altogether unnecessary on this occasion to be discussed: every degree of constraint, which might appear inconsistent with the principles of civil liberty, on which the constitution of these kingdoms is founded, has been very properly avoided in forming this design. The Society uses no compulsion: it takes no children under its care, but with the free consent of the parents: it has no authority in this respect, but in the case of vagrant and deserted children, whether born of Popish parents, or such as might otherwise fall into the hands of Papists; and this authority it exercises with great moderation. It invites the parent by the manifest and undoubted advantages which it offers: by the benefit of relieving the parents themselves from a present burthen; by the certain prospect of the child's being well taken care of immediately, well maintained for some years, and made capable of getting a good livelihood in an honest employment for the rest of his life. That so many have accepted of the invitation, notwithstanding their own violent prejudices, and the priest's dreadful interdiction, is a clear proof of the great benefit and real advantage of the offer. And it may be supposed, that the antient custom
peculiar

peculiar to this Nation, and which has universally prevailed in it, of giving their children to be bred up in other families rather than their own, though in some instances it has had mischievous effects, may in this at least have a favourable and useful influence; that the parents from this usage may be better disposed to commit their children to the Fostering hands of the Society; and that the near relation, which such adoption is esteemed to create, may have a conciliating effect, and help to allay the animosities even of religious party.

EVERY argument, which proves the importance and necessity of good education in general, and of the charitable education of the children of the poor in particular, may be urged in its full force in behalf of this design; and receives additional strength from every peculiar circumstance, that distinguishes it from others of a similar kind. Its end is not merely to assist, to cherish, to improve, to furnish with good principles and useful abilities; but even to gain, and in a manner to create, useful and good subjects to the community: it is to eradicate an evil, that lies at the very heart of the state, that pervades the whole system, and mixes with its vital blood; obstructing its sources of wealth, weakening its powers of defence, and rendering its safety always doubtful and precarious. Every lazy and useless member is a loss to the nation:

every

every discontented Papist, that deserts his country, and enters into the military service of a foreign state, is a real enemy: every bigoted zealot, that lies in wait at home for the distresses of his country, ready to join the first adverse power that invades it, is the worst, the most dangerous, the most implacable of all enemies. To convert these into good subjects, or, that being a desperate attempt, to supply their places with good subjects in the next generation; this is a design not only beneficial and important to the welfare and prosperity of the state, but essential even to its stability and existence.

EVERY objection, which has been urged against Charity-Schools in general, hath in these been wisely and happily obviated. Those, being situated in populous Towns, (for such must ordinarily be their situation,) are exposed to all the corruptions with which such places will abound: the children, collected from their several homes to attend the school for certain portions of the day, will be apt to lose in the commerce with their neighbourhood, and their own families, the good impressions, which they may have received at the school; and domestic bad habits and bad example will render ineffectual the best public instruction. These, situated for the most part in country Villages, are at a distance

tance from the contagious intercourse of the city ; or, in the city itself, are secluded from all hurtful commerce with it : and the children, being removed as far as possible from their parents and relations, that they may not be in danger of being again perverted to Popery, are at the same time placed out of the way of temptation to many vices, to which they would too often be exposed at home.

It has been frequently objected to our Charity-Schools in general, that the mode of instruction pursued in them is calculated to raise the objects of it above their proper rank in life, by giving them qualifications, and notions, and expectations, superior to the station to which they belong, and making them in these respects unfit for the lowest and most laborious employments. It is beside my purpose to inquire, whether this objection may not have been invidiously aggravated : it is sufficient for me to observe, that it cannot be made here. The instruction of these children is sufficient for all the purposes of the Institution, without going beyond its due bounds : it is limited to reading, writing, and the first principles of Christian knowledge : the time allotted to this instruction is properly circumscribed ; not quite a fourth part of the business of the day is assigned to it. The rest is appropriated to manual labour, to agriculture,
to

to gardening, to manufactures, to household employments, to providing for themselves necessaries, to procuring with their own hands food and raiment. Thus Letters are but one part, and that far from being the most considerable part, of the Institution ; and the name of School gives but an imperfect idea of the design. The whole plan consists of a School, a Workhouse, a Farm, a Garden, a Household ; each of which supplies its proper object, and materials, to art and labour, to capacity and diligence : an excellent plan, highly worthy of imitation, whenever it can be adopted with propriety and advantage. Their Schooling is indeed properly an apprenticeship to labour, to order, to regularity, to obedience to superiors, to the worship of God : its design is to induce habits of industry, of honesty, of humility, of piety ; to give them an early and lasting impression, that a life of labour is to be their lot, and that ‘ in the sweat of their face they must eat their bread ;’ a lot indeed, in various degrees, and in different manners, common to all the sons of Adam, but which in its most obvious and strict sense must be theirs ; in a word, to render them useful members of Society, dutiful Subjects, good Christians, and good Protestants.

The utility of this design speaks for itself, and the good effects of it cannot possibly be doubted.

From the nature of it, its progress must be gradual, its operation slow, its consequences in respect of the public for some time perhaps imperceptible; yet are they not the less sure. This at least is apparent, that above Two Thousand children at a time are actually received, maintained, instructed in these Schools; and near Four Hundred infants are constantly supported in the Provincial Nurseries, in order to be transplanted into the Schools at a proper age; all, not only rescued from the snares of idleness and vice, and of the most slavish superstition, and probably from penury and wretchedness, but furnished with abilities of gaining an honest livelihood, and with a proper knowledge of their duty: that within less than Forty years, (in the first part of which period, during the infancy of the Charity, little of this sort could be done,) above Four Thousand have been placed in services and apprenticeships, and put in a way of earning their bread with comfort, and perhaps of thriving in the world: that the apprentices have not only been received gratuitously, but even with a stipulation of reward at the expiration of their service; a clear proof of the reputation of the Schools, and of the acknowledged usefulness of this mode of discipline: that near Three Hundred of them on their Marriage with Protestants have received a donation from the Society, wisely bestowed to encourage and assist

assist them in establishing families. These are certain and palpable benefits, which must have an immediate influence; and though at first they may seem lost in the great mass into which they are thrown, yet, continually accumulating and increasing, they must have in due time a sensible effect upon it: like the operation of the Gospel itself in its gradual increase from small beginnings; which our Saviour aptly compared to a little leaven covered up in a large vessel of meal, and fermenting by degrees and mixing with it, till the whole is leavened. To reform a nation, to change the manners of a people, to subdue inveterate prejudices, to introduce new principles, and new modes of thinking and acting, is a work that requires time, and patience, and perseverance: if the design be good, and the means wisely devised, and steadily pursued, and the whole diligently and faithfully executed, let us trust the success with GOD; and let us not doubt, that ‘He, who supplieth seed to the sower, and bread for food from the seed sown, will supply and multiply the seed which you sow, and increase the fruits of your charitable work.’

As we are here less immediately engaged in the execution of this design, and are at too great a distance to judge of the propriety and fidelity with which it is carried on, otherwise than in a

general view, and from consequences rather than facts, I shall not presume to enter into a detail of the methods of conducting it, or to give an account of the care and attention with which they are pursued. Every thing must principally depend on the careful inspection of the Local Committees; and on the constant attention of the General Committee, which receives information from them, and has the chief direction of the whole. To their prudence and diligence it must be ascribed, that this great work has been so successfully carried on hitherto; and, presuming upon the continuance of their faithful and zealous endeavours, we have the best grounds to hope for its future success.

BUT from a state of the accounts of the Society it appears, how properly their care has been lately employed in reducing expences; and in making some alterations, which in that view the exigence of their affairs required. These have been managed with so much prudence, as well as frugality, as considerably to lessen the expence, without diminishing the benefit of the Charity. Some Schools, disadvantageously situated, or otherwise ill circumstanced, have been discontinued; and the children transplanted, and placed in others; so that though the number of the Schools is lessened, the number of the Children educated continues the same. Indeed the Society is under a necessity

cessity of adopting every frugal measure consistent with the purposes of the Institution. So far from being encouraged to enlarge their views, and to carry them to that extent, which the nature and importance of the object requires; they find themselves, on the contrary, obliged even to contract their plan, and to decline the voluntary offers of generous benefactors, from an inability on their part of cooperating with them, and carrying their pious designs into execution. The late great increase of the price of provisions, and of all the necessaries of life, in that kingdom as well as in our own, has in effect considerably reduced the funds of the Society, which were never in any degree proportionable to the magnitude and importance of the design; and hath made them now fall so greatly short of its unavoidable expences, that we are obliged to apply for assistance to the liberality of private persons; and to the bounty of the public. The pious and the humane will reflect on the great advantages reached out by it to the children of the poor and needy; rescuing them from laziness and vice; from ignorance and superstition, from imminent danger of misery and perdition both of body and soul: the Legislature of Ireland will in their wisdom consider, that the increase of the wealth, the strength, the population, the security, of their country, is the great object of this undertaking;
and

and may perhaps no longer suffer so important a national concern to subsist on funds for much the most part casual and precarious, and which are found by experience to be not only insufficient for the improvement and completion of this excellent work, but greatly inadequate even to its present necessary demands *.

AND may God open the hearts of the rich, incline the wills of the great, and guide the counsels of the wise, to the support, the improvement, and the extension, of every generous design, charitably formed, prudently devised, and faithfully executed, for the good of our country, and for the glory of his holy name. Such, we presume, in an eminent degree, is this Institution. Scarce any other example can be given, in which the views of Religion and Policy are so justly connected, and so intimately united. The interests
of

* From the Estimates subjoined to the Petition of the Society, presented to the House of Commons of Ireland in the last Session, it appears, that the Expences of the Society for Two years are at an average about

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	£ 28,000.
The Funds ditto	about	_____	_____	_____	11,000
Deficiency in Two years		_____	_____	_____	17,000

The Parliament usually grants £12,000, to make up the Deficiencies of Two years. The grant of £15,000 by the Parliament in the last Session, was extraordinary, on account of the great Expences incurred by building Nurseries.

of the Kingdom of Ireland are more immediately concerned : but whatever affects the prosperity, the strength, and safety of that kingdom, must greatly influence the welfare of our own ; and though we were not at all concerned on account of any union of national interest, or temporal advantage, yet the common motives of humanity, and the sacred obligations of Religion, ought to excite our zeal in this good work, of relieving our brethren, of assisting the poor, and instructing the ignorant. Let those, who are more immediately concerned, earnestly engage in the promotion of it, as true lovers of their country, justly solicitous for its civil and its spiritual welfare : let us, as friends, fellow-subjects, and fellow-Protestants, heartily concur with them ; “ for our brethren and companions sake, let us wish them prosperity ; yea, because of the house of the LORD our GOD, let us seek to do them good.”

F I N I S.

the first of the month of January, 1793, the
 President of the United States, George Washington,
 issued a proclamation, in which he declared that
 the first day of January, 1793, should be
 observed as a day of public fast and prayer,
 in order to seek the assistance of the
 Almighty for the success of the American
 arms, and for the establishment of peace
 and harmony between the United States
 and the Kingdom of Great Britain. This
 proclamation was issued in the name of
 the President, and was signed by him.
 The first day of January, 1793, was
 observed as a day of public fast and
 prayer, in all the cities and towns of
 the United States. The people of the
 United States were called upon to
 assemble in their churches, and to
 pray for the success of the American
 arms, and for the establishment of
 peace and harmony between the
 United States and the Kingdom of
 Great Britain. The people of the
 United States were also called upon
 to abstain from all pleasures and
 amusements, and to devote the day
 to the service of God and to the
 interests of their country.

A S E R M O N

Preached at

Christ-Church, *DUBLIN*,

On the 23d Day of March, 1745.

BEFORE THE

Incorporated SOCIETY, for promoting *English* Protestant
Schools in *I R E L A N D*.

By *THOMAS*, Lord Bishop of *KILDARE*.

Published at the Request of the SOCIETY. 1

With a CONTINUATION of the SOCIETY's PROCEEDINGS to the
25th of March, 1746.



D U B L I N:

Printed by *GEORGE GRIERSON*, Printer to the King's Most Excellent
Majesty, at the *King's Arms* and *Two Bibles* in *Essex-street*, 1746.

At a General Meeting of the Incorporated SOCIETY, for promoting *English* Protestant Schools in *Ireland*,
Dublin, Sunday the 23d of *March*,
1745.

Ordered on Motion;

THAT the *Thanks* of this Society be given to the Right Rev. Thomas Lord Bishop of Kildare, for the Sermon by him preached before this Society; and that his Lordship be desired to let the Society have a Copy thereof, in order for them to cause the same to be Printed and Published.

JOHN HANSARD, Secretary.

A
S E R M O N
Preached at
CHRIST-CHURCH,
D U B L I N, &c.

PROV. Chap. xiii. Ver. 23.

*Much Food is in the Tillage of the Poor: But there is that
is destroyed for want of Judgment.*

IN these Words there are two Assertions, which may seem, at first Sight, to bear little or no Relation to each other. But if we consider them more closely, we shall find perhaps that there is a Connexion between them, and that the latter contains in it the principal Reason why that Plenty which in the former is ascribed to Tillage, or Culture, as its natural Effect, is not constantly produced, namely, *for want of Judgment:*

The Word *Judgment* may be taken in two distinct Senses; it may either signify Virtue and Discretion in private Life, or a wise and just Administration with regard to the Publick.

If by *want of Judgment* be here meant want of Virtue and Discretion in particular Persons, then the Import of these Assertions, when thus jointly considered, seems to be this: That tho' the natural Effect of well-applied Labour be Plenty and Prosperity, yet there are who are impoverished and even *destroyed* for want of judging and acting rightly in this respect; either for want of apprehending how necessary and how advantageous *Industry* is, or else for want of right Management in the Application of that Industry.

But if by *Judgment*, in this Place, we ought rather to understand, what it more frequently signifies in the sacred Writings, *a wise and just Administration of Government*, then the Meaning must be, that tho' Industry be naturally productive of Plenty, yet there are Places and People that reap not this Benefit for want of proper Laws, or a due Execution of such Laws, with regard to employing the Poor.

And therefore, in speaking farther to this Subject. I shall endeavour to treat it in such a Manner as may serve, in some Measure, to prevent the many great Inconveniences which are apt to arise from each of these Defects.

I. And first then, should the Question be asked, What Obligation we are under to take the Burden of Labour upon us, it may be sufficient to observe, by way of Answer, that if the Laws of our Country, or the Commands of our God and Saviour are of any Weight with us, both these, we know, do so expressly forbid *Idleness*, and enjoin *Industry*, that there can be no doubt but that we are bound in Duty, not only as rational and social Beings, but also in our religious Capacity, as the Servants of God and the Disciples of Christ, to contribute our proper Proportion of Assistance towards maintaining and promoting the Welfare of the Community; and consequently, that it is not only unfit, but also unjust, and even irreligious to be *idle*.

But as *Authority*, however well grounded, is not often well received, let us appeal to Nature and the Reason of Things, and see what Instructions they will give us.

Now if we consider the Nature of Man and the Situation he is in, it will plainly appear that he was intended by his Creator for an Active Life. Our Bones, Muscles, Sinews, and Nerves are all so framed and disposed, as not only to be constantly ready for Motion, but also to move with the utmost Ease, and with a surprizing Force and Quickness, in exact Obedience to our Will. And as the Formation of the Body in general, so every Part, but more especially the *Hands* have

have a very remarkable Aptitude for Labour, peculiar to the human Species, which is well expressed by the Word *Dexterity*, and is always greatly encreased by Exercise and Habit. And what a very good Judge of the Powers of Nature has cursorily observed, in one of his Aphorisms, will, I doubt not, be confirmed by Experience, “ That even an infirm old Man who has “ been long accustomed to Work, will bear Work “ better, will do it more readily, and go through it “ with less Fatigue, than such as are both young and “ strong, but un-used to Labour.”

And then such is the Energy or Activity of the human *Mind*, that by some it is held to be its very Essence. But however that be, it is plainly the Nature of it to be very Active and Busy; and if it be not supplied with proper Materials for it to work upon, it will catch at every Trifle that passes, and waste its Strength in quest of Employment. Whereas, on the other Hand, when rightly employed, the more it is exercised, the more Strength and Quickness it acquires, and becomes the more expert in all its Operations. So that the very Frame of our Constitution, both in Body and Mind, is an Exhortation to *Industry*.

Which Truth may be still farther enforced by this following Observation: That both our *Necessities* and our *Pleasures* call upon us to be Industrious.

Other Animals have Food and Raiment provided for them by Nature. But Man must provide both for himself;

himself ; or at least, some pains must be taken before he can be conveniently Accommodated with either. So that if *Industry* were to cease, our bodily Sustenance would be cut off, and our Subsistence cease with it.

And the same Lesson of Instruction is inculcated to us by the Necessities of the *Mind* ; which is, at first, a mere empty Receptacle ; capable indeed of receiving and retaining great Treasures of Knowledge ; but then those Treasures are not to be obtained without *Industry*.

In short, which ever Way we look, whether *within* or *without*, whether we consider our own Nature, or the Nature of Things about us, we shall find that *Industry* is absolutely necessary, not only for the Improvement, but even for the Preservation of the whole.---*Industry* is the Main and Master Spring, by which all the Wheels of the social System are put in Motion ; and without *Industry*, the whole Earth would be a Scene of Wilderness and Distress ; and Man, who Stiles himself the Lord of the Creation, in a worse State than the Brutes.

And if our *Necessities* cannot be answered without the assistance of *Industry*, much less then can we reasonably Hope to enjoy any *Pleasure*, or, at least, any *lasting Pleasure* without it.

Men of Business are very apt to imagine that they should be much Happier than they are, if they had nothing to do. And yet how few have made the Experiment, by retiring from Business to their wish'd-for

Quiet,

Quiet, without being soon convinced of their Error; no Labour being half so burdensome as want of Employment. The very Word *Amusement* seems to imply, That in order to be *pleased* we must be somehow *employed*. Almost every Thing that ministers to our Pleasures is the effect of *Labour*. And the Man who studies his own Ease most, has most Occasion for the Labours of others, and therefore most Reason to encourage *Industry*, however *Indolent* he may be himself.

Nor is it in *private Life* alone that *Industry* is of so much Importance. There being no political Maxim more true, or more generally acknowledged to be so, than this: "That the Strength and Wealth of every Nation depends chiefly on the Number of working Hands employed in it." As a Proof of which give me Leave to observe, that a Writer of good Authority in Calculations of this Sort, has computed every common Labourer to be worth to the Publick, at an Average, between Eight and Nine Pounds a Year.† And if so, then every *idle* Hand does, as it were annually rob the Publick of that Sum, besides being otherwise hurtful to it, in many respects.

But

† By a later Calculation every working Hand is computed to be to the Publick, at an Average, about Eleven Pounds a Year clear Profit; the Price of Labour being considerably raised within a few Years.

But as it is not *mere Labour*, but Labour in conjunction with *Art*, and managed with *Judgment*, that is thus beneficial to Society, and for want of Judgment much Industry is *destroyed*, or thrown away.

II. Let us now therefore, in the next Place, proceed to consider, what Rules and Methods are proper to be observed, in order to render *Industry* effectual, and make it conducive to the *Publick Good*.

It would, I am sensible, be a vain Attempt to aim at unfolding all the Mysteries of Trade, or pointing out the best and most skilful Manner of exercising all the various Arts in which the Labour of Man is employed; especially for one who has not any Skill or Experience in Mercantile Affairs; and therefore *that* I shall not pretend to. But without descending so far into Particulars, thus much we may safely say in general, that there are some prudential Rules and Maxims with regard to the Encouragement and Application of Labour, which, if duly observed, would be highly Beneficial, and greatly contribute to the Prosperity of this Kingdom. Some few of which I shall take the Liberty to mention.

1. And here, in the first Place, it is very obvious, that one of the surest Ways to make *Industry* prevail, in the most effectual Manner, is, to let those who are disposed to be Industrious, find the Benefit of being so: To let the Labourer, *who is worthy of his Hire*,

enjoy the Hire which he is worthy of, and be secure of the Property which he honestly earns by the Sweat of his Brow: To give proper Encouragement to all Arts and Sciences, not only by particular and extraordinary Præmiums (which, tho' useful and necessary to excite the first Sparks of Emulation, are not to be rested on as a sufficient and durable Support to any settled Trade or Commerce) but also by a general and constant good Treatment of such as Work in them; (without which all other Methods and Attempts will signify little) by allowing them to partake, in due proportion, of the common Advantages arising from Industry, and not cruelly *muzzling the Ox which treadeth out the Corn*. It being a very just Observation which Solomon makes, that *He who oppresseth the Poor, to encrease his Riches shall surely come to Want*.

2. Another Rule which ought always to be observed, with regard to the Application of Industry is, that such Occasions as are most Pressing and of most Importance, be most attended to, and first provided for.

A wise Builder will be sure that his Foundation be well laid, and made perfectly secure; before ever he attempts to raise a pompous Superstructure upon it. And when it is raised, he will consult *Convenience* more than *Show*, and not lavish away, in superfluous Embellishments, what he may hereafter, if he does not at present, stand in Need of, to keep the Fabrick in proper repair; knowing well that the more magnificent

cent the Edifice is, the greater, if it falls, will be the Fall thereof, and the greater the Discredit which will attend its Fall.

And if this be Wisdom in private Life, it must be still more so with respect to the Publick, in proportion as the Publick Welfare is of more Importance than that of any private Person, or Family. And tho' it be true, that if one Member suffers the whole *Political Body* must, in some measure suffer with it; yet one Member may suffer, or even be cut off, and the rest of the Body still subsist; but should the whole Body, should the Constitution decay, every Member must decay with it. Which shews the Folly as well as the Unfairness of those narrow-minded People who are regardless of the publick Welfare, though their own has a necessary and close Connexion with it. It being the very same absurdity as it would be for any Man to refuse his Assistance towards saving the Vessel in which he is embarked, though, at the same Time, excessively anxious to preserve his own share of the Goods that are on Board.

3. A third Rule highly proper to be observed in the Application of Industry is, to turn the Course of it into such Channels as are most open to receive it, most commodious for it, and least liable to Obstructions.

To Succeed in any Attempt when *Nature* and *Reason* are against us, is a very difficult Task. But if we

act in Concert with *them*, and pursue such Methods as *they* point out to us, it is easy to make a great and speedy Progress in Improvements. This or that Scheme may appear well in Speculation, but is it *practicable*? That's the main Question. For if it be not, it is nothing. And the chief Difference between a Wise Man and a Fool is this: That the one chooses such Means as are *proper* and *suitable*, but the other such as are *improper* and *unsuitable*, to obtain his End.

4. Again, fourthly, the more effectually to promote *Industry*, it behoves us all, in our several Stations, to discountenance every Thing that is, in any shape or degree, a hindrance to it; and particularly *Popery*. For that *Popery* is a Clog to *Industry* is plain, among many other Proofs, from the exorbitant Number of *Holy-Days* which the Church of *Rome* requires to be observed, and will not suffer to be profaned by bodily Labour.

It being computed that the Labourers who are *Papists* do less Work in a Year than such as are *Protestants*, by at least a Tenth Part; and consequently are proportionably so much less useful to the Publick, from the Observance of so many *Fasts* and *Festivals*, besides other frequent Interruptions of Business occasioned by *Penances*, *Pilgrimages*, and the like. And if we farther consider what Swarms of *Drones* lie idle in their *Monastical Cells*, who might and would be useful Members of the Community, if set at liberty, and
rightly

rightly employed, there can be no Doubt whether *Popery* be not an hindrance to *Industry*, and consequently hurtful to *Society*.

5: But after all, *except the Lord keep the City, the Watchman waketh but in vain*. Human Power and Wisdom is, at best, but very imperfect, and will avail but little without the Blessing and Assistance of Heaven; and therefore, the Last Thing that I shall mention as the surest Means to crown our Labours with Success, is a truly Pious and Virtuous Life.

The Children of this World i. e. They who attend to nothing but this World, are said to be *Wiser in their Generation than the Children of Light*; not because the *End* they have in View is more Valuable, or more Worthy of Pursuit, but because the *Means* They make use of, and the Care they take to compass that End, are better suited to their Purpose, and more agreeable to the Rules of Prudence. And, in general, undoubtedly, this is much too true. But, at the same time, it is certain, that the Wisdom of *this* World also is so far guilty of the same Absurdity as the Sons of Light are here reproached with, and is so far Foolishness even with regard to *this* Life, as it suffers *Virtue* and *Religion* to be neglected and discountenanced. *Immorality* and *Profaness*, or an utter Disregard of all Principle, being altogether as inconsistent with *true Policy* as with *true Religion*. And it is really very surprizing that this important Truth is not more, and
more

more seriously attended to. But however, the less it has been hitherto regarded, the more occasion there is for its being *now* duly considered, and laid to Heart; that the Things which belong to our Peace and Prosperity be rightly understood, and properly provided for, in this *our* Day, least the time should come when it may be too late; when, through our own Folly and Mismanagement, they may, irrecoverably, *be hid from our Eyes*.

III. Having thus endeavoured to illustrate and enforce the Doctrine of my Text as a general Truth, I shall now proceed to make such an Application of what has been said as may be suitable to the *Present Occasion*.

1. First then, if *Industry* be so *necessary*, so *reasonable*, and so *beneficial*, both in *private* and *publick* Life, as has been shewn, where then is the *Wisdom*, or where the *Virtue* of that Sort of *Almsgiving*, which, instead of promoting *Industry*, has the quite contrary Effect; encouraging *Idleness*, *Wantonness*, and *Vice*. Charity *misapplied* may have the Merit of a *good Intention*; but is, in Fact, an *Injury* done to the *Community*. And therefore, it were much to be wished, that well disposed Persons would call in *Prudence* to direct their *Benevolence*; and not suffer themselves to be teized out of their Alms, by the noisy *Clamours* of the insolent *Vagabond*, or defrauded of them by any *Arts of Deceit*. The Widows Mite when properly applied, may, in Effect, be *more*, may carry more *Benefit* as well as more *Virtue*

Virtue with it, than much larger Sums *indiscreetly* given, or rather thrown away upon improper and unworthy Objects.

2. Another Reflection which naturally occurs from what has been said, is this : That if the surest Method to make *Industry* effectual is, to let those who are disposed to be Industrious find the Benefit of being so; then that Custom, which too much prevails, of constantly shifting the poor Labourer from one barren Spot of Ground to another, as fast as ever he reclaims them, without allowing him Time or Room to reap any Advantage from all his Labour, beyond a bare scanty Subsistence-----This Custom, I say, must surely be exceedingly wrong, in all respects. It is, as the Prophet *Isaiab* has strongly expressed it † *Beating the People to Pieces, and grinding the Faces of the Poor*; it is both *Cruelty* and *Folly*, it is weakening the Hands by which we are fed, and cutting off our own Supplies for fear that they who provide them for us, should, in any Degree, partake of them with us. Than which nothing surely can be more *ungenerous* or more *absurd*.

3. Again thirdly, if it appears from what has been said, that those Necessities which are most pressing, and those Occasions which are of most Importance, should be most attended to, and first provided for, then *Til-*

lage

Wool and the *Linen Manufacture* are undoubtedly the two main Points which we of this Nation ought chiefly to regard; with respect to the former, I mean *Tillage*, the necessity of it is but too evident, from the immense Sums of Money which have frequently gone, and are still continually going out of this Kingdom, merely for Bread-Corn; which nothing but our own *Indolence*, or *Indiscretion* could so often occasion. And as to the latter, the *Linen Manufacture*, the Benefits which have already arisen from it are instead of a Thousand Arguments to convince us of it's Importance. *Plenty* and *Prosperity* attend it's Progress; and wherever it stops, there *Sloth* and *Poverty* begin to take Place.

Among the many national Evils and Calamities denounced against the *Egyptians*, by the Mouth of *Isaiah*, the decay of their *Linen Manufacture* is one of their Chief; which the Prophet forewarns them of, in the 19th Chapter of his Prophecy and at the 9th Verse, in these following Words, *Moreover they that work in fine Flax, and they that weave Net-work shall be confounded*: Shall, with Shame and Confusion, sink into Ruin, by losing the Art and Exercise, and consequently the many Advantages of that important Branch of Commerce. And as it appears that the principal Cause of Their suffering, in this respect, was their *Folly* and *Perverseness*, their *Immorality* and *Superstition*, let us
take

take warning by *their* Example, least, by being guilty of the same Crimes, we incur the same Punishment.

4. But fourthly, if it be a Rule which ought always to be observed, in the Application of Industry to turn it into such Channels as are most open to receive it, most commodious for it, and least liable to Obstructions, this is a farther and still stronger Reason why *we* should look upon those before-mentioned, but more especially the *Linen Manufacture*, as the chief Fountain of our Prosperity; having found by *Experience* (which in all such Cases is the safest and surest Guide) that it is a perpetual Spring of great Profit, and such as is more secure than any other from being either obstructed or exhausted. But, at the same time, it may be proper to observe, that tho' *Tillage* and the *Linen Manufacture* ought to be the *chief* Objects of our Care, for the Reasons before assigned, yet is it equally necessary, in point of Prudence, that the Particular Circumstances of the several different Parts of the Kingdom be duly considered, and that the Children of the Poor should be trained up to Labour, in various Ways, according as the various Occasions of different Places may require.

5. My Fifth and last Observation is this: That if *Industry* in general, if *Tillage* and the *Linen Manufacture* in particular, and lastly, if the true *Protestant Religion*, are Objects worthy of our Care, and the most probable Means to promote the Welfare of our Coun-

try, then, consequently, That Institution in behalf of which we are here assembled; does well deserve all the Countenance and Encouragement that has been given, and all that can be given to it. It being highly rational and useful in all respects, and as well adapted to answer the Ends for which it was designed as can well be conceived. And if the surest Way to make Industry effectual is to give all proper Encouragement to the Industrious, then † That Society also which makes the Encouragement and Improvement of all Arts and Sciences its peculiar Care, must contribute not a little to the same good Purposes, and be particularly well suited to go Hand in Hand, as it kindly does, with that of the *Protestant Working Schools*.

And therefore whoever is really and truly a Friend to this Country will also, and for that very Reason, be a Friend and Patron to these Societies. And they who are Friends to these Societies do thereby give a substantial Proof that they are really and truly Friends to this Country.

And if so, how thankful ought we to be, in the first Place, to Heaven, for having raised up to us so many Friends, of all Ranks and Degrees, both at Home and Abroad; but more especially in our Sister Kingdom, which (influenced by the great Example of our gracious

† The *Dublin-Society*; for the Support of which, his Majesty, upon the Recommendation of his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant, has been graciously pleased to give 500 l. per Annum.

ous Sovereign) has kindly, with a most liberal Hand, encouraged and promoted this useful Institution. Of which Subscriptions, Gifts, and Legacies to the amount of *Eleven Thousand Pounds*, are no slender Proof. Nor has this copious stream of Benevolence flowed in upon us, in the Day of Peace and Plenty alone, but is, in great Measure, still continued to us, even at a Time, when they themselves are harassed and distressed by civil Disturbances. As appears from many considerable Instances; and especially from one, very lately given, by a † Person eminent for her Charity, upon all Occasions, and who closed the Period of her Days with an ample Contribution for the Support of this Society, as the last and best Proof she could give, that *Benevolence* and *Discretion* were the ruling Principles of her Conduct, throughout her whole Life.

And as Children are apt to imitate their Parents, even our distant Colonies, not forgetting the Rock from whence they were hewn, have already contributed largely, and express'd a Disposition to do still more, for the Support and Advancement of so noble a Design.

How thankful therefore, in the next Place, ought we to be, to those worthy Persons themselves, who are not only the Instruments and Channels by which these Benefits are conveyed to us, but do, as it were, Co-operate

† Mrs. *Esther Houblon*, lately deceased, has bequeathed, as a Legacy to this Society, the Sum of 500 l.

Co-operate with the Divine Goodness, in rewarding Industry and Virtue with Plenty and Prosperity.

The first Seeds of this Plant were, it must be owned, both Few and Small; and there was, for a time, some reason to fear that tho' the Ground was good, it would grow but slowly for want of being sufficiently sheltered and properly watered from *Above*. But as it is now become the Care of the * *Publick*, being kindly Countenanced and Cherished by those whose Business, whose Pleasure, and whose Honour it is, to consult and provide for the Publick Good, it will, we doubt not, through the Blessing of the Almighty, soon *take Root downwards, and bear Fruit upwards*, extending its Branches through the Land.

Finally Brethren, whatsoever Things are True, whatsoever Things are Honest, whatsoever Things are Just, Pure, Lovely, and of good Report, if there be any Virtue, and if there be any Praise, any thing Virtuous and Praiseworthy, in promoting the Knowledge and Practice of these Things, then, for the Sake of these Things, for our own Sake, and for the Sake of the Community, Let us all, in Proportion to our Abilities, encourage and promote this well-judged Charity, which will be highly Beneficial, in many respects; by rescuing many from Distress, and, at the same time, turning many to Righteousness; at once promoting both Virtue and Happiness, Private and Publick, Temporal and Eternal.

* The Produce of a new Fund being lately appropriated to the Use of the *Charter Schools*, by Act of Parliament.

A
S E R M O N
PREACH'D before the
S O C I E T Y

Corresponding with the *Incorporated Society in
Dublin*, for promoting *English Protestant
Working-Schools in Ireland*,

At their Anniversary Meeting in the Parish-Church of
St Mary le Bow, on *Thursday, March 28th, 1745.*

By the Right Reverend
MATTHEW Lord Bishop of BANGOR.



L O N D O N :

Printed by JOHN OLIVER, in *Bartholomew-Close*, near
West-Smithfield. M.DCC.XLV.

Bow Vestry,

March 28. 1745.

At the Anniversary Meeting of the Society corresponding with The Incorporated Society in Dublin, for promoting English Protestant Working-Schools in Ireland ;

AGREED, That the Thanks of the Society be given to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of *Bangor*, for his Sermon preached this Day before the Society ; and that he be desired to print the same.

Lawrence Cole, Secretary.



I TIMOTHY IV. 8.

For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.



SHOULD we consider this Text as a Sentence by itself, and form our Judgment of the Meaning of it from the Sense which the Words in their full Latitude might import; it would look as if the Apostle promised the good Things of this Life to the idle and unactive Part of Mankind, provided they were Godly, and by intimating bodily Exercise or Labour to be an useless Part of human Actions, discourage one of the main Branches of that charitable Undertaking we are met to cherish and promote.

promote. But it is impossible that *St Paul* could have any such Meaning as this: *St Paul*, who in the great Exigencies of the Infant Christian Church, had foregone his Right of Maintenance, ministering with his own Hands occasionally to his own Necessities; and who had given it in charge to the *Thessalonians*, 2d Epist. ch. iii. ver. 10. *That if any would not work, neither should he eat*; could never mean to set true Religion and honest Industry at variance; or to suggest an Imagination, that the temporal Wants or Prosperity of any People would be supplied, without an Application of the natural Means, appointed by the Wisdom of Providence for the attaining them.

INDEED, upon a closer View of the Text, neither the Meaning of the original Word [*γυμνασίω*] nor the Analogy of the Context, doth well admit of such an Interpretation; but rather leads to a Comparison between Bodily Exercises and Spiritual in Matters of a religious Nature. For however natural it might be to hope, when the practical Doctrines of the Gospel were fully known to the World, that by the plain Simplicity of the positive Institutions, and rational Rule of Life recommended by them, our holy Religion must have effectually convinced the Understandings, and gained the Hearts of all, who had any Sense of a Deity, or of the Duties to Him and to one another: However clear and intelligible the Morality of the Gospel is delivered, strongly founded in the Principles of right Reason, and enforced by every Consideration, that could any way contribute to the real and lasting Happiness

pinels of Mankind: However spiritual and sincere the Worship of the Heart is enjoined to be under the Christian Dispensation; yet so strangely depraved, and so oddly compounded are the Faculties of the human Soul, that we find few of the first Converts in a Disposition to receive the Truth, plain as it was delivered to them.

MANY of the *Jewish* Converts became Judaizing Christians, and thought the Practice of Virtue and Piety upon mere Gospel Principles barren and jejune, without the Addition of some of their own legal Ceremonies. The Gentiles wanted to retain part of their Heathenish Superstition, and to partake of the Lord's Table at the same time with the Tables of their own Idols: And almost all seem to have been carried away with a Notion, that in the Exercises of their Devotion somewhat more was expected than the Profession of their Faith in a crucified Saviour, and Addresses to God for the Pardon of their Sins through Him; and to be enabled in their Conversation to govern themselves by his Example and Precepts. A very little Attention to the Canonical Epistles, to those of *St Paul* in particular, will shew that one of the principal Drifts of them was to rectify Mistakes of this kind in Practice; and the Success was answerable to their Design. The Influence of the Apostolick Writings to dissipate the Mists of Heathenish Idolatry and Superstition, as well as to abolish the Formalities of the *Jewish* Law, was generally speaking prevalent in the first Ages of Christianity.

BUT

BUT what is very observable, the Apostle limits not his Care on this Behalf to his own Time; he extends his View to Futurity, and leaves the Text with *Timothy* as an Antidote against those superstitious Practices, which he foresaw would be the Produce of After-Ages. Now the spirit (says he, at the Beginning of the Chapter) *speaketh expressly, that in latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lyes in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry; and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving. For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.* It is almost impossible to read this prophetick Passage of Scripture, without applying it to those superstitious Tenets and Usages, which have for many Years overspread the greatest Part of Christendom under the Sanctions of Papal Authority.

WHAT other Party of Christians ever dealt so much in lying Wonders, and deluding the People with an hypocritical Pretence to the Spirit of Infallibility, as the Leaders of the Church of *Rome*? Upon what Teachers are the Doctrines of Devils chargeable, if not upon those who are ready to call down Fire from Heaven upon every Occasion against those who will not receive them; and to persecute with Fire and Faggot, and horrid Massacres, all that differ in Opinion with them? Are Vows of Celibacy
and

and Distinctions of Meats, meritorious Acts of Religion in the Account of any other Sect of Christians? Or bodily Exercises and Austerities reckoned equivalent to the Practice of every social Virtue, by any but Monks of the *Romish* Persuasion? Had the Apostle himself lived till these latter Times, he could hardly have described the Iniquity and Folly of that Persuasion in more lively Colours and Expressions: And what is his Conclusion upon them? Why? *That bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come*: Of every thing good, both here and hereafter.

LET us then consider a little more at large the Truth of St *Paul's* Doctrine in the Text: It falls in with the Business of our present Meeting; will furnish us with an Application very apposite to this Charity; and if we are desirous ourselves of partaking the Rewards of Christianity, points out the religious Practice by which they are to be obtained.

Now if by bodily Exercises we understand the whole Exterior of Religion; every religious Act and Deed wherein the corporeal Organs are made use of; every Word spoken to express our Sense of God, and our Inclination to obey him: The Meaning of the Apostle would be even then in the comparative Sense it is here put, intelligible and true. He says not, that bodily Exercise is quite insignificant and useless, but *that it profiteth little*. Expressions of our Duty to God by Acts of Abstinence and Fasting, by outward
Deeds

Deeds of Devotion and Charity, may be very useful to restrain the exorbitant Cravings of our vicious Appetites, and to preserve the intellectual Faculties clear and free: They are of good Report, and may be available by Example to excite and encourage a Spirit of Piety in one another; and as it is impossible for the true Sense and Sincerity of our Minds to be made known to our Fellow Christians, but by Words and outward Gestures; so far as these correspond with Truth, and are conformable to the real Sentiments of our Hearts, they are of very considerable Benefit to cultivate the Growth of Piety in our own Hearts, and promote a right Sense of it in those we converse with. But even in this most advantageous Light of bodily Exercise, it profiteth little, compared with solid Piety and Virtue. It profiteth only as a commendable Means, to the most glorious End of Man's Being: It profiteth only like Food and Raiment to the Preservation of Health; or like Medicines to recover it. *But is not life more than meat? and the body than raiment?* Is not the Enjoyment of Health of infinitely greater Value than the Drugs and Regimen made use of to procure it? Even so *bodily exercise profiteth little, but godliness is profitable unto all things.*

WHAT Health is to the Body, That is Piety to the Soul; a sound Habit, which is necessary to give a Relish to all the Pleasures we are capable of enjoying; the only Ingredient that can make them permanent and real. It is what the Scriptures recommend under the Representation of the Kingdom of God and his
Righ-

Righteousness : And since upon the most intimate Acquaintance with human Nature, as well as from Revelation, this Habit of Mind is found to be the Point of Perfection every rational Creature ought for his own sake, as well as the Glory of God, to aspire after : It certainly ought always to be of the first and highest Estimation, above every other Attainment wherewith the human Mind can possibly be adorned.

So far then as the external Acts of Religion conduce to enlighten and invigorate the natural Powers of the human Soul ; so far as they help to confirm our Resolutions to act conformably to the Will of God ; to subdue every irregular Thought and Passion that would exalt itself in opposition to our reasonable Duty ; and to form every good Inclination and Action into a settled Habit of Piety and Virtue ; so far are they of very great Service in all the ordinary Proceedings of Life, and deserve our Attention to observe them. In our present Condition and Circumstances indeed, whilst the Soul is so united with a Body as to be under a Necessity of using corporeal Instruments, both to increase its own Stock of Knowledge and communicate with others : The pious Man is under a Necessity of paying his Adoration to the supreme Being with his Body, as well as with his Spirit. His Religion otherwise would be nothing more than a kind of mental Quietism : flat and insipid to his own Breast ; barren and useless to all around him. But this is far from reaching *St Paul's* Sense of the Word *Godliness* : For how could it then be profitable to all Things ? Nay,

he himself has recommended Works of Mortification and Self-denial as necessary Duties, in other Passages of his Epistles. He exhorts the *Hebrews to provoke one another to Love and to good Works*, and reprove the Manner of those who forsook the assembling themselves together for the Service of God; and has left one very significant Precept for the due Regulation of those Assemblies, That every Thing should be *decently, and in order*. Nay, perhaps, if an Enquiry were made into the Causes of the Decay of Piety among Protestants, more would be placed to the Neglect of the solemn Times and Places appointed for publick Worship; to a Contempt of Seasons set apart for religious Purposes, than to any other Cause whatever. Mental Religion alone, however refined it may be to Persons in Retirement, will never do for Societies of Men. They will be always governed more by Example, than Precept; and live by Imitation, rather than Maxims deduced from their own Speculation and Reason. Numbers of Men have not a Capacity to investigate all the Rules of Religion and Piety, necessary to conduct them to Happiness; and more want Leisure from the unavoidable Exigencies and Occupations of Life, to do it. And how then should these ever hope to reap the Advantages promised as the Reward of Godliness, if those who have both Capacity and Leisure do not shew them the Way by a good Example? It is highly incumbent therefore upon all who have it in their Power, for the sake of others as well as for their own Improvement, to observe every
Regulation

Regulation necessary for keeping up a Face of Religion; to be constant in their Attendance upon publick Worship, and serious in the Exercise of it. For in this Respect bodily Exercise profiteth greatly; though not like Godliness, unto all Things; the Profit of it receiving the whole Value from that Godliness which it promotes.

BUT, Secondly, *St Paul's* Words may be explained in another Way of Interpretation, agreeably to what I before hinted, and as expressive of that sort of religious Practice; which would substitute bodily Exercise in the Place of Godliness, and make some external Observances equivalent to the Practice of sincere Piety and social Virtue.

THE Verses preceding the Text seem rather to lead us to this Meaning of it. For as the Apostle there takes Notice of Marriage, and Distinctions of Meats, of Matters left indifferent to the Choice of every one, to practise or let alone according to his Discretion; as he takes notice of these, I say, being made Matters of Consequence in Religion, and disallows any Degree of Holiness to belong to them, any otherwise than as they are sanctified by the Word of God and Prayer: It should rather seem to be his Intention in this Passage to discountenance the setting up any Thing for Religion; which was not so; than to make a Comparison between the outward Modes of Religion, and inward Piety of the Heart. And in this View, very little indeed doth bodily Exercise profit. Is it not

rather a Means of deluding the Conscience, and lulling it asleep, under a Notion that the Guilt it has contracted may be expiated, without the Trouble of a thorough Change of Mind by Repentance? For how easily would a religious Character be obtained, if a scrupulous Exactness in observing a few outward Ceremonies would do it? If the counting over of Beads were a sufficient Penance for indulging every Irregularity of the Desires of the Heart; if a temporary Abstinence from some particular Kinds of Food, would atone for the Excesses of Intemperance at every other Season; if a Pilgrimage, and offering some small Matter at the Shrine of an imaginary Saint, would procure a Pardon for Crimes of the blackest Nature; for Oppression and Injustice, Rapine and Cruelty, Perjury and Murder; and even an Indulgence in Practices of the same Kind in Time to come: Who would be at the Pains and Trouble of setting a Watch upon his Heart, of correcting all the irregular Intents and Purposes of it, and of subduing his Will and Affections to the Obedience of Faith in the Gospel?

BUT surely, so little Profit is there in Practices of this Kind, that hardly any Thing could be thought of more destructive to the true Interest and Happiness of Mankind. Destructive in every View, as they strike at the very Root of all Virtue and Goodness; as they tend to unhinge all the Bands of Society; and most fatally to delude Men into a Security, that they are doing what is acceptable to God, and pleasing Him, by Means the most likely to put it out of their Power

ever

ever to do it. For when once the Follies of Superstition have so far gained an Ascendant over the Judgment, as to set Religion and Virtue at enmity, and suggest even a Possibility of being a religious, without being an honest and good Man; who can tell where such Follies will end? The Delusion is too flattering to Flesh and Blood, not to have some Attention paid to it: Few Men that ever think of Death and an After-Reckoning, but would be glad to be well prepared for it; to embrace a Scene of infinite Happiness hereafter upon Terms so easy, and consistent with the Indulgence of their headstrong and mad Passions; and to be carried straight into *Abraham's* Bosom, from a Life of Voluptuousness and Riot.

IN FACT, does not the History of Religion in all Ages, shew the general Bent of Mankind to such superstitious Usages? their Desire to propitiate the Deity by bodily Rites and Exercises; and their Hopes of appeasing Him by costly Sacrifice and Offerings? The Gentile Superstition consisted in these Things only; and notwithstanding the most excellent Moral Law was the immediate Gift of God himself to the *Jewish* People, and that with the most remarkable Circumstances of Majesty and Awe: yet we find by the Complaints of all the Prophets and good Men amongst them, that the Ritual and Ceremonial Law was the chief Object of their Care and Observance; and that they were even with Difficulty to be restrained from bowing the Knee to *Baal*.

ONE principal Part of the Errand upon which every Prophet was sent to that People, was to reprove those very Practices; to mark the Preference that was due to Mercy before Sacrifice, to Godliness before bodily Exercise; and to prepare them for the Reception of the Messiah, as well by foreshewing the Nature of his Kingdom, as of his Person and Sufferings. The single Authority of *Isaiab*, in the Introduction to his elevated Prophecy, is sufficient to establish this Truth. *To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me, saith the Lord? ver. 11. I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. ver. 13. Bring no more vain oblations: incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths; the calling of assemblies I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even your solemn meeting. Your new moons, and your appointed feasts, my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear. And what is the Reason of God's Displeasure against these Rites and Sacrifices of his own appointing? Why? the Iniquity of his People Israel; or, as it is well expressed in one Word following; Your hands are full of blood.*

WORDS could not give a more full Description of the corrupted State of Religion among the Jews at that Time; or of the little avail of external Rites, when they were not accompanied with a suitable Sanctity

tity of Manners. But hear how the Prophet goes on, (ver. 16.) *Wash ye, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes: cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless; plead for the widow.* And what will be the Consequence of these Works of Piety and Goodness? It follows; *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land.*

I HAVE quoted the Passage more at large, because it is a kind of Paraphrase upon the Text; and shews not only the Correspondence of the two Divine Teachers, at those distant Times, in the Nature and Truth of their Doctrine; but their Agreement in the Reason of applying it, (*viz.*) the general Disposition of Mankind to run their Religion into Superstition; and to substitute Rites of little or no intrinsic Value in the Room of true Piety.

PERHAPS the Gentiles, who wanted the Light of Revelation to direct them, might be in some sort excusable; and the *Jews*, who had a large Ceremonial Law enjoined them, find somewhat of a Reason from thence to palliate their Practice. But turn over the New Testament from one End to the other; consider every Doctrine and every Institution; recollect every Precept and every Promise you have learnt there; and you will find all directed to the same Mark, and conspiring to strengthen and establish the Cause of Godliness

ness and Virtue. The Practice of these only, through Faith in Christ Jesus, will entitle us to the Blessings of the Gospel, and open an Entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven.

WHAT then must be our Opinion of those Teachers, who would usurp the Keys, and open an Entrance through the broad Way of Sin and Superstition? who by their Penances and bodily Austerities; by their Masses for the Living and for the Dead, and by the superabundant Stock of good Works laid up in Store by their religious Monks, will undertake to extinguish the crying Guilt of even Perfidy and Murder; and engage to make Saints of such flagitious Wretches as, when living, were a Reproach to human Nature, and disgraced it by their Deaths? So great in their Account is the Profit of bodily Exercises, as if the Reverse of the Apostle's Doctrine were true; and the Promise of the Life that now is, as well as that which is to come, appropriated to it. But Thanks be to God, we have not so learned Christ: Thanks to his good Providence for leaving the Fountain of living Waters open, for every one to go draw for his own Use: Thanks to Him, for preserving an outward Profession of his holy Religion, established upon such Rules amongst us, as cannot, without the utmost Weakness and Folly, be perverted to any other Purpose, than promoting the good Cause which is profitable to all Things. But how can we so effectually express our Gratitude to God, as by following the Apostle's Rule, in refusing what he calls *profane and*
old

old wives fables, and exercising ourselves unto godliness?

THIS is an Exercise in every View useful and salutary, and becoming human Nature; being that alone which truly and ultimately answers the End of our Creation. It is an Exercise which tends to store the Mind with useful Knowledge; to clear the Judgment, to subdue the extravagant Sallies of Passion, to rectify the Will, and direct every Faculty of the Soul to the only true Object of its Rest and Happiness. Nay, it is an Exercise, with which the Comfort and Pleasure of every real Enjoyment of the present Life is very closely connected. For, does not Health and Reputation, and whatever is called the external Goods of Fortune, depend more upon the Exercise of Temperance and Prudence, of Beneficence and Justice, than upon any other Cause? Can any other human Means, can all of them together, contribute so much to avert the common Evils of Life, of Pain and Sickness, of Dejection and Sorrow, as a Course of Piety and Virtue? or to support and cheer the Spirit under them, as a Consciousness of her own Integrity? To enumerate all the Advantages of Piety, would be to recollect and lay before you every Thing that deserves the Name of excellent and perfect in itself; every Thing that can have any Share in improving and adorning human Nature. The wise Man very well comprizes them all in two short Sentences, describing of *Wisdom*, by which he means the same Thing with *Godliness*: *Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour*:

Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

ALLOW me to apply what has been said, and I will have done. — Seeing then that the natural Reward of virtuous and religious Practices, resulting from the very Constitution of our Beings, is desirable and great ; and the Promise of God annexed to it infinitely greater ; let the Sum of our Cares and Endeavours center in the Advancement of this Practice. There is nothing in it harsh or unprofitable, but what we make so by our own Negligence and Mistakes : nothing inconsistent either with Business or Pleasure ; if the one be just, and the other innocent. It is Iniquity in transacting Affairs, and Excesses or Unlawfulness of Pleasure, that makes them interfere with the Exercise of Godliness, and has put Men upon inventing such Exercises to appease the Anger of God, and solicit his Favour, as have brought Discredit upon Religion, by restoring to it in Popish Countries no better an Appearance, than of Heathenish Superstition. But seeing that we are happily reformed from every Abuse of this kind ; and the Profession of our holy Religion is plann'd out upon the Model of Truth and Liberty ; ought not our Zeal for the Preservation of it always to keep Pace at least with the Zeal of our Enemies to destroy it ? Mistake me not, as if I meant to inflame your Zeal to that Degree of Fire and Fierceness wherewith our Enemies are usually animated : The Zeal I would recommend is, *according to knowledge* ; such a Warmth of Affec-
tion

tion and Inclination to our holy Protestant Religion, as will never suffer us to slacken our Endeavours to maintain the publick Profession of it among ourselves, and enlarge its Interest among our Neighbours; Such a Zeal for the Cause of Truth and Godliness, as will open our Hearts, and influence our Wills to help those to Instruction, who are not in a Capacity to help themselves; as will never allow Self-Interest, or any wayward Passion, to estrange our Love, or shut up our Purfes against them.

AND surely, among the many excellent Charities which by the Blessing of Providence abound in this Nation, that which we are now met upon very justly merits the Attention of the Great and Wealthy; of every one who is serious in his Religion, or the Exercise of his Benevolence. For whether we consider the Objects of the Charity themselves; Greater cannot well fall within our Notice: or the Publick, whereof they are Members; A readier Way to make them useful could not be thought of. Whether we have it in View to promote the temporal Interest of the poor *Irish* Children; there cannot be a surer Way, than to train them up early to a Life of Industry and Labour: Or their Eternal; than to imprint upon their tender Minds the Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. So that in the Exercise of this Charity, we may truly be said to exercise the Objects of it to that Godliness, which, if it be not their own Fault, will to them be profitable unto all Things; and at the same Time assure ourselves of a Reward.

To enlarge upon all the Uses of this laudable Undertaking, would not fall within the Compass either of my Time or Skill. Many of the most advantageous Topicks have been copiously handled, before one or other of the Sister Societies of the two Islands: and the Members of the Societies have great Reason hitherto to rejoice in the Fruits of their Labour, and the growing Prospect of their useful Charity. Only one Thing more, flowing immediately from my Subject, give me Leave to observe, and to conclude with.

SINCE it is the Happiness of these Nations to have the freest Enjoyment of their Religion of any Nation upon Earth; of their Religion, according to what every one may learn for himself in the inspired Writings, clear of all the traditional and sinful Follies of Popish Superstition: Since they have a Prospect of the Continuance of this inestimable Blessing to themselves and their Posterity, under the mild Government of a truly illustrious and Protestant King and his Family: Let it never be in the Power of those who come after us to say of this Generation, that either by a total Disregard to Religion, or Indifference about the Means of preserving it, they are deprived of those Blessings which we enjoy'd. Now what Means could be proposed more likely to be preventive of such Mischief, than the Erecting of Protestant Working Schools, in the Way they are conducted by these Societies? For whatever Danger may arise from the subtle Working of Popish Emissaries in this Kingdom, (who have not, I fear, been idle of late Years) however by their false

false Suggestions and secret Intrigues they may lead captive some few of weak Understanding and Judgment; yet the principal Danger is not from hence. The greatest Danger must arise where the Papists are the most numerous; the People kept in the greatest Ignorance, and even soothed by their Priests in Beggary and Idleness. But to lessen these Numbers; to cure that Ignorance; to introduce a Spirit of Industry, and a proportionable Increase of Plenty, into a Kingdom linked in the same Interests, and under the same Government with ourselves, is the glorious Design I could wish to recommend——

Go on then and prosper, under the Direction of a good God, in thus exercising yourselves unto Godliness! Keep the End of your Charity always in view; and let not any frivolous Objections byass, or temporary Obstructions deterr You, from pursuing all the probable Means of attaining it. In the very Nature of Things, it must be a Work of Time to carry your Design to Perfection. Persevere steadily in what You have successfully begun; and I pray and trust to the great God, that He will in his own good Time make good to us all the *Promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come*, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

F I N I S.

A
S E R M O N
PREACH'D before the
S O C I E T Y

Corresponding with the *Incorporated Society in
Dublin*, for promoting *English Protestant
Working-Schools in Ireland*,

At their Anniversary Meeting in the Parish-Church of
St Maryle Bow, on *Thursday, April 2d, 1747.*

By JOHN THOMAS D.D. Canon Residentiary
of *St Paul's*, and Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty.



L O N D O N :

Printed by JOHN OLIVER, in *Bartholomew-Close*, near
West-Smithfield. M.DCC.XLVII.

Bow Vestry,

Thursday,
April 2d, 1747.

*At a general Quarterly Meeting of the Society
corresponding with The Incorporated Society
in Dublin, for promoting English Protestant
Working-Schools in Ireland.;*

AGREED, That the Thanks of this Society
be given to the Reverend Dr *Thomas*,
for his Sermon preached this Day before the
Society, and that he be desired to permit the
Society to print the same.

Lawrence Cole, Secretary.



M A T T. XX. 3, 4.

And he went out about the third Hour, and saw Others standing idle in the Market-place,

And said unto them, Go ye also into the Vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you : And they went their Way.



T the twenty seventh Verse of the preceding Chapter, we find St Peter thus addressing our LORD ; *Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee ; what shall we have therefore ?* Our LORD replies in this gracious Manner, *Verily I say unto you, That ye, which have followed me in the Regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in the*

Throne of his Glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve Thrones, judging the twelve Tribes of Israel: Ye that have suffered, shall also reign with me: And adds this farther Declaration, that every one that had forsaken Houses, or Brethren, or Sisters, or Father, or Mother, or Wife, or Children, or Lands, for his Name's sake, should receive an hundred fold, and should inherit everlasting Life: Or, as it is more fully expressed in St Mark's Gospel, should receive an hundred fold now in this Time, and in the World to come eternal Life.

As it was natural to suppose, from the Turn and Cast of the Minds of the Apostles, that they would apply these Declarations in a peculiar Manner to themselves, and be *exalted* above measure with the pleasing Prospect which they afforded; we find our LORD, in the next Verse, subjoining this remarkable Expression; but *many that are First shall be Last, and the Last shall be First*: Designing, as it should seem, that the serious and awakening Nature of it might correct and moderate those Hopes and Expectations, which the Largeness and Extent of such a Promise, added to their own Prejudices in favour of a temporal Messiah, would most probably inspire.

BUT because there was a seeming *Abruptness* and Difficulty in this Expression, *Many that are First shall be Last, and the Last shall be First*; because it might, if not rightly understood, tend to perplex the Minds of Men, and might dispose them to think

GOD arbitrary or unsteady in his Dealings, and might tempt them to call in Question his Justice in the moral Government of the World; our LORD, at the Beginning of this Chapter, undertakes to open and clear this Point more fully to his Disciples, and to shew its entire Consistency with the divine Justice.

AND the clear, and undoubted Equity of this Proceeding, that *many that are First shall be Last, and the Last shall be First*; that They, to whom the divine Will is discovered later, provided they obey it with Sincerity and Diligence, will so effectually recommend themselves to the Favour of GOD, as to be equalled, or even preferred to Those who were called first, and neglected to make suitable Improvements; I say, the clear and undoubted Equity of this Proceeding He chooses to illustrate by the following Similitude.

THE Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a Man, that is an Householder, which went out early in the Morning to hire Labourers into his Vineyard. Those he then found, he agreed with for a Penny a Day, and sent them into his Vineyard: But as the Labourers were few, the Parable goes on to inform us, that he went out about the third Hour, again about the sixth and ninth Hour, and was himself an Example of that Industry, to which he invited others: Nay, so intent is he upon promoting and encouraging Diligence, that he went out about the eleventh Hour, and even then hired those that he found standing

ing idle; in Hopes that they would employ this *last Hour* well, and make up for the Time that had been lost, by exerting their utmost Care and Application in planting and dressing his Vineyard. Nor was this an unreasonable Expectation, when he considered, that they had offered this just Excuse for themselves, that *no Man had hired them*; and consequently, that their Idleness did not proceed from any Love of Sloth, but from the Want of Employment.

IT is to be observed, that the Householder agreed with those who were first hired *for a Penny a Day*; and as to the Rest, engaged to give them whatsoever was *right*, what would be a reasonable Recompence for their Labour. The Agreement therefore was the Rule to be observed in paying them who were first hired; but as for those who came in afterwards, the Householder was at Liberty to diminish or increase their Wages; and though they had *wrought but one Hour*; to make them equal to others, *who had born the Burden and Heat of the Day*: If He thought the faithful Services of those, who came in at the eleventh Hour, deserved this Reward, it was surely *lawful* for him to do what he would with his own: Nor had they who were first hired, any just Cause to complain of this Indulgence to others, when no Injustice was done to themselves. It was the Favour and Bounty of the Householder, which they had no Right to restrain; which their own Pride and Envy had misrepresented to them, and which, when they were

were removed, would appear to be as just as it was gracious.

THE excellent Design which we are met to recommend and carry on, answers both to the Letter and Spirit of this Parable with a remarkable Exactness. The Parable itself affords us a very instructive Lesson of Industry, and of the Desire and Concern which we should express to find Employment for the Idle; and to engage them in some honest and useful Way of Life. And as the Householder's hiring Labourers into his Vineyard at so many different Parts of the Day, from the Morning early even to the eleventh Hour, denotes to us the different Calls to the Belief and Practice of true Religion, which have been vouchsafed to the World from the Beginning down to these *last Days*; the Letter and Spirit of the Parable plainly take in both Ends of that excellent Charity, which sets out upon no less important a View, than that of promoting HONEST INDUSTRY and TRUE RELIGION.

WHEN Men formed themselves into Society, it was implied in the Nature of the Agreement that none should be idle: Things were to be carried on by their joint Abilities, and by their joint Strength: They united for their mutual Convenience, Support and Defence; and in order to procure such Advantages, as could not be provided in a State of Nature, where Men are to be considered, and act, as Individuals: There is therefore a common Obligation upon all the Members.

Members of it, of contributing to the Good of the Society by Labour of some kind or other.

WHEREAS the idle Person evidently withdraws that Share of Help and Assistance which is required towards carrying on the general Scheme, and consequently neglects to comply with the Terms of the Association. But the Evil does by no Means stop here; for his Share of Duty and Industry devolves upon others, who are thus constrained to toil for him, and to make up the Deficiencies which arise from his keeping back his Proportion of Labour: By this Means he becomes a Burden to the Society, and lives upon *the Sweat* of other Mens *Brows*; and this evidently breaks in upon one of the chief Ends of their combining together, which was, as I observed, that they should jointly contribute to provide for the Wants of the Society.

AND whoever thinks closely and justly upon this Subject, will soon perceive, that his own Interest and Happiness are so strictly connected with that of the Community, that they cannot long be divided, without Detriment to both: The Slothful therefore and Useless should consider, that if all the Members acted upon their Principle, the Society would be again resolved into so many Individuals; and the forming them into a Body for their greater Convenience and Comfort, and Improvement, would be so far from producing the desired Effects, that it would be attended with the greatest Disorder and Confusion, from the Inactivity
and

and Uselessness of the several Members. It is therefore necessary, that the common Good and Interest of the Whole, which first combined Men into Society, should be their governing Principle. * If any *Roman* Citizen suffered his Field or Vineyard to lie neglected, it was esteemed a Crime of so dangerous a Nature, that the Censors punished it by depriving him of his Freedom : And there was a † Law among the *Egyptians*, which other Nations have transcribed into their Systems of Government, by Virtue of which every Subject was obliged, under the severest Penalty, to give in his Name to the proper Magistrate, to specify what Way of Life he was in ; what Business, Study, or Employment he followed ; how he lived ; by what Art, Profession, or Occupation.

It is not difficult to see into the Reason and Foundation of their Policy in this Proceeding : The Man, who is improving his own, will have no Time to injure or invade another's Property : His Wants will be fewer, and such as he can supply by his own Industry ; and the Man, who is intent upon his own useful Trade or Employment, not only assists and serves the Community, which cannot so well subsist without it ; but, which is a very material Consideration, lives *accountably* : The Society know how he spends his Time, and can always answer for him.— Industry

* Aul. Gell. *Noct. Att. Lib.* 4. c. 12.† Herodot. *Hist. Lib.* 2. p. 157. Sect. 177. Edit. Gronov. 1715.

and Diligence bring along with them this considerable Advantage, that they prevent our deviating into such wrong and vicious Pursuits, as are dangerous and destructive, not only to ourselves, but to the Community of which we are Members.

FOR what is to be done ? How are the Deficiencies which arise from the Want of Industry to be made up ? These Men *cannot*, we know, *dig, to beg* they are *ashamed*. These Wants therefore, which regularly should have been supplied by their own Labour ; and which, under proper Discipline, would have been few and moderate, become numerous and craving, and drive them into Acts of Injustice and Violence.

THE Necessities of Nature do not cease, when Men cease to provide for them : The Sluggard must be fed and clothed, and must have *where to lay his Head* ; the Demands of Nature, at their stated Seasons, return upon him ; and he has the same common Wants and Appetites with other Men : His Sloth and Indolence cannot stop this Course, or oblige it to follow his Example, and go on more slowly and lazily : The Calls of Hunger and Thirst will not wait, much less be put off, for fear of disturbing his Tranquillity. What then will be the Consequence ? This Inactivity must end either in Sullenness and Despair, or, which is much more probable, in supplying out of other Mens Labour, what has been wanting in his own ; who by this Means will be exposed to the Effects of Fraud or Violence, and who seem to be under

der a kind of Necessity of compounding for being injured in the Way least hurtful and oppressive.

THERE is something in the Character of the Sluggard so mean and ungenerous, that it cannot but give the justest Offence: When *all the Parts of the Creation are at work, and answering the Ends of their wise Author, what Shadow of an Excuse has he to offer for this extravagant Singularity: *These all*, I suppose, in his Opinion, *wait upon* him; but the Opinion is weak and false: He too has his Work of Body or Mind appointed by a Law, which he cannot reverse, and which he cannot, with Impunity, transgress.

IN order to shew how useful and beneficial Industry appears in every Light, I would remark farther; that it is not easy to say, how much *bodily Exercise profiteth* the Mind; how greatly it promotes its Health and Vigour, and what a Security and Fence it proves against the Exorbitancies of the Passions: The Man who is employed in a constant Course of Application to Business, generally speaking, *thinks soberly*; he thinks and reasons as cautiously and regularly as he lives: His Mind, however it may be less improved by Art, or Culture, is generally calm, and well-disposed; and therefore fit to receive such Knowledge and

* There are some just and beautiful Sentiments to this Purpose in the Beginning of *Marcus Antoninus's* Fifth Book, *De Rebus suis Gatak.* Fol. Edit. p. 139, &c.

Instruction, as shall be proposed to him by *those* Members of the Community, who serve it in a different, but not less laborious, Capacity.

BEFORE I quit this Part of my Subject, I would just add, in farther Proof that Man was designed for an active and industrious Life, that Sloth dispirits and enfeebles him, and inflicts such a Lassitude, as the Busy and Diligent are entire Strangers to: So that the most which the Slothful can propose to themselves is, to change one kind of Weariness for another, which is not so easily removed, or so easily borne, as having its Foundation in the Neglect, and Desertion of their Duty; and therefore sure to be attended with the Disapprobation, if not Reproaches, of their Minds.

UPON the Whole then, it cannot but greatly recommend the present Design to the Approbation and Care of wise and good Men, that it proposes to inure Children to Habits of Industry, to reconcile them early to Labour, to instruct them betimes that the Community has a Right to their Services; and, as it supports and maintains them, to direct these Services, as the Calls, and Necessities of the Society shall require; and to make these Impressions early, before the contrary Habits have weakened and unnerved them.

NOR does the Spirit, and Moral of the Parable bear a less Resemblance to the other Branch of this excellent Design; which is to preserve, or reclaim
these

these Children from Idolatry and Superstition, and to bring them up in the Belief and Practice of pure Religion.

EVERY School which is erected for this Purpose, may be considered as another Call to Reformation: And the Promoters and Encouragers of this *Good Work*, imitate the wise Care of the Householder in these repeated Applications.

THE different Calls of GOD to Mankind, which are intended by the Moral of this Parable, were designed to convert the Heathen from their Idolatry, and to give them just Notions of GOD, and of the *Manner* in which He is to be worshipped. And these Protestant Schools are calculated to serve an Interest of, at least, equal Importance; to reclaim Christians, who live in more than Heathenish Ignorance and Superstition, from their Errors and Corruptions. I say, an Interest of, at least, equal Importance; for surely, the Danger arising from continuing in these Errors and Corruptions, must be at least equal in the Case of Christians.

IT has been very justly observed, and indeed fully made out, that there is a strong Likeness between Heathen and Christian *Rome*; but with this very material, and unhappy Difference, that the Latter carries on her Superstition and Idolatry under the Light of the Gospel, and yet in direct Opposition to its Laws and Precepts.

TO rescue these Children, who are now sucking in the very Dregs of Popery, and therefore, without this
kind

kind Interposition, sure of being exposed to all the various Miseries, which Sloth, and Ignorance, and Superstition can entail upon them: I say, to call them out of this Darknes, into the *Glorious Light* of Truth and Liberty, is evidently a Design of the most useful and excellent Nature; and stands clear of all Objections, of every, even the least Imputation. To guide and lead them at their first setting out in the dubious Path of Life; and to lay the Foundation of their present, and future Happiness, in early Industry, and in early Piety, is the most promising, as well as agreeable, Labour of Love.

AND who will say that the extreme Poverty of their Parents was not intended to *open an effectual Door* to the Preservation, or Conversion of these Children? Had not this Distress happily interposed, the Children would have been trained up in the false Notions and corrupt Practices of their Fathers; but now they *suffer their Children to come unto us, and forbid them not*. If there is any Force or Compulsion in the Case, it is only such as arises from the Methods of God's Providence in the Government of the World; or such as is the natural Effect of their own Sloth and Ignorance: No Advantage is taken of this Necessity, but this reasonable and kind one, of opening the Eyes of their Children, of bringing them to the holy Scriptures, and of enabling them to judge for themselves, what they *must do to inherit eternal Life*.

IN order to this important End, it is undoubtedly best and safest to set out right, in the Belief and Practice

tice of true Religion, *to remember their Creator in the Days of their Youth*; to make that wise and happy Choice for themselves, or to suffer others to make that wise and happy Choice for them, which will be able to stand the Test of their maturer Reason, their riper Judgment.

IT is therefore an Advantage of a peculiar Nature, attending this excellent and useful Design, that it receives these Children from the Hands of their Parents, before they are too strongly tinctured, and impregnated with the Spirit of Popery; before the emissaries of *Rome* have erected their Empire over their Minds; before they are scared by the Thunder of their Anathema's; before they are practised upon by their specious Pretences; and, in particular, by this very weak, and yet very prevailing Argument: "Protestants allow that You may be saved in our Communion; whereas we maintain that You cannot be saved in theirs: Therefore choose that Church where both allow Salvation is to be *obtained*." I say, this very weak Argument, because the true Church is certainly best known, as the true Mother was, by her Tenderness and Compassion; by endeavouring to engage the divine Mercy for her own Children, without presuming wholly to engross it.

THERE is another Consideration of very great Weight, which cannot, I think, fail of having its proper Effect upon us; that by promoting, and encouraging this Charity, we evidently weaken an Interest, the Growth and Power of which cannot be

too much dreaded in these Kingdoms: An Interest, which delights in meditating, and contriving our Ruin; and which lately attempted to deprive us, by one fatal Blow, of all the invaluable Blessings derived to us from those great and interesting Events, the *Reformation*, and *Revolution*: An Interest therefore, which we cannot guard against with too much Attention and Jealousy. And we not only weaken this Interest, but we weaken it in one of its Strong-Holds; where it still prevails to an unhappy Degree; where it continues to corrupt the Minds, and alienate the Affections of His Majesty's Subjects.

WHEREAS, if the Success of this Charity bears any Proportion to our reasonable Expectations, the Face of Things will be greatly changed; and the Children of these deluded Parents, instead of being brought up in Sentiments of Wrath, and Malice, and Bitterness against us, will breathe only Benevolence and Love, and will readily engage with us in the same glorious Cause of Truth and Liberty: They will not any more *hurt*, or *destroy*; and will express a just Detestation of all Cruelty and Persecution, in promoting that Religion, which was at first taught and recommended by its blessed Author, with the most unwearied Patience, and Forbearance, and Condescension: And we shall effectually prevent, or subdue their other Prejudices, and reconcile them to the best constituted Form of Government; to our most gracious Sovereign; and to a Succession of Protestant Princes in his Royal House.

THESE

THESE are important Points indeed: These have a plain and direct Tendency to strengthen and perpetuate our present happy Constitution, which must secure all that is valuable to *Englishmen* and Protestants. Upon the firm and lasting Establishment of this Constitution, *true Religion*, and *reasonable Liberty*, under God, depend: *True Religion*, and *reasonable Liberty*, the great, the invaluable Blessings of human Life; without which, it scarce deserves to be compared to a Dream: for that admits of some pleasing Intervals, and a Respite from Anxiety; without which the Animal, and even Vegetable State, is more to be desired than the Rational.

TO all the other Motives which I have suggested, give me Leave to add, that we cannot but esteem it our Happiness, as well as Duty, to be thus instrumental in conveying Plenty, and Prosperity, the natural Effects of Industry and Virtue, to our neighbouring Kingdom. By these endearing Offices of mutual Love and Charity, we shall promote and cultivate a stricter Alliance and Friendship with that Nation: This most useful and affectionate Intercourse, will lay such a lasting Foundation of mutual Esteem and Good-will, that we shall act with one Heart in the Defence and Preservation of our Religious and Civil Liberties.

THERE was a Time when, according to human Appearances, there was little or no Prospect of bringing this *excellent Work* to any great Degree of Perfection, and when the Supplies which should have fed

it seemed to be exhausted : But the good Providence of GOD watched over it, watered it at this thirsty Season with *the Dew of Heaven*, and has since *made* it to flourish.

I SHOULD not have mentioned this Circumstance at present, but because it teaches us this very useful Lesson, not to be soon *moved*, or *shaken in Mind*, at the unavoidable Difficulties which always attend great and good Designs. We should consider, that the Opposition they meet with, is one convincing Proof of their Excellency, that it often eventually contributes to their Success, by inspiring the Persons who are engaged in them with a juster Concern, with a more unwearied Resolution ; and that there is this unanswerable Argument for persisting in those Schemes which we know to be right in themselves, and beneficial to Mankind ; that, if we submit to the Obstructions and Discouragements which will always be thrown in our Way, no such Schemes can ever be carried into Execution.

BUT it was *Your Glory*, and is now Your Happiness, that ye were *stedfast* and *immoveable* in this *Work of the LORD* ; and You plainly see, that your *Labour was not in vain in the LORD* : For the Truth of this, I need only appeal to the Number of your Schools, and to the Reports of your Local Committees, which at the same Time that they encourage, reward your Care.

THE Subject of Charity is so very interesting, and the many Blessings to be derived from this most useful

ful Branch of it, present themselves so strongly to my Mind, that I know not how to stop — My *Mouth is open to You, my Heart is enlarged!*

BUT I will detain you no longer — May These Your good Deeds fight for You, in the Day of Necessity, better than a mighty Shield and a strong Spear : May they prevail upon our Gracious GOD to arise ; then our Enemies will be scattered, and they that hate us will flee before us.

F I N I S.



the first of the month of January 1791
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THE HISTORY OF THE



A
S E R M O N

Preached before the HONOURABLE
H O U S E of C O M M O N S,

A T
S T. M A R G A R E T'S, W E S T M I N S T E R,

O N
W E D N E S D A Y, J A N U A R Y 30, 1793:

Being the Day appointed to be observed as the Day of the
M A R T Y R D O M of King C H A R L E S I.

BY THE REVEREND THOMAS HAY, A. M.

C H A P L A I N T O T H E H O U S E O F C O M M O N S.

L O N D O N:
PRINTED FOR J. WALTER, CHARING-CROSS.

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M.DCC.XCIII.

R O M A N S, XIII. 5.

WHEREFORE YE MUST NEEDS BE SUBJECT, NOT ONLY
FOR WRATH, BUT ALSO FOR CONSCIENCE SAKE.

AMONGST the many considerations which recommend Christianity to our wonder and gratitude, none is more admirable, than that of its being adapted, by the simple and general nature of its precepts, to the reception of mankind in all ages and countries.

IT was not to be confined, like the Jewish revelation which preceded it, to the belief and practice of any specified description of men, who might be distinguished by particular habits, manners, and form of government: its doctrines were to be more widely diffused, its blessings to be

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more

more generally felt; “ (a) ITS SOUND WAS TO GO FORTH
 “ INTO ALL LANDS, AND ITS WORDS INTO THE ENDS
 “ OF THE WORLD :” it became necessary, therefore, that
 its commands and institutions should accord with the general
 state of civilised society, and superadd the sanctions of
 its divine authority to the moral obligations of social harmony
 and order.

THE precept of St. Paul, delivered in my text, is to be
 numbered amongst those, which are not only so general as to
 be applicable to the condition of every nation on which the
 light of the gospel might shine, but also so important as to
 be indispensably necessary to the happiness and safety of
 every community. The gospel prescribes no particular
 form of civil government, but, under every one not repugnant
 to the ties of moral and religious obligation, commands
 obedience to the existing laws; and inculcates this duty from
 motives of “ conscience” rather than of “ fear,” from a
 sense of our duty to God, rather than an apprehension of the
 “ wrath” of man.

(a) Psalm xix. 4.

THE

THE passages of scripture are (*b*) numerous, which directly enjoin a due “ (*c*) SUBJECTION TO PRINCIPALITIES “ AND POWERS,” and “ obedience to the civil magistrate,” which inculcate a respect and deference to human laws, upon the immediate and express authority of God.

THE whole of Christianity, indeed, is calculated in its general tendency to endue its disciples with all those virtues which render them valuable members of a state; and to repress all those vitious inclinations, which endanger the tranquillity of society. Christianity, rightly understood, and conscientiously practised, must promote, not only the happiness of individuals as separately considered, but as connected with each other; must render a people united, peaceful, prosperous, and happy: misapplied indeed, or perverted by weakness, by wickedness, or fanaticism, it has, in different ages, been made the parent of mischiefs the most dreadful; the signal for insurrections the most extensive and sanguinary; and the pretence for enormities the

(*b*) Amongst other passages, see Matt. xxii. 16—22. Romans, xiii. 1—7.

1 Peter, ii. 13—17.

(*c*) Titus, iii. 1.

most atrocious. Can such effects be reconcileable to the genuine spirit of that religion, which developes the true nature and attributes of God, and marks the duties which man owes to his Creator, his fellow creatures, and himself? those great duties, of reverence and submission to the dispensations of the supreme will; of justice, mercy, and Christian charity; and lastly, the various obligations of self-government and controul: which enjoins the cultivation of our good affections, the constraint and extinction of every evil passion; thus stifling, in a manner impracticable by human laws, our natural disposition to evil in its birth, by the restraint imposed on our very thoughts and inclinations; and curbing the violence and preventing the sway of those tumultuous passions, which hurry men to the commission of the greatest crimes, and most ferocious outrages; till, in the progress of depravity, they become the scourge of their country, and the bane and abomination of society.

To the uncontrouled influence of guilty passions, and
the

the deplorable effects of a wild enthusiasm, is that awful and lamentable event principally to be ascribed, which we are now assembled to bewail, and which the wisdom and piety of the legislature hath enjoined us to commemorate, in an anniversary of fasting and humiliation.

THE observance of the stated return of this day is, at all times, highly useful and important, as a season of devout humiliation to God, and of sober and mournful recollection of those events, of their causes, progress, and consequences, by which our country was so long involved in a cloud of guilt, confusion, and misery: but if there can be a period, at which these considerations become more especially pressing and important, a period, when we are carried almost irresistibly, by every sense of duty, and by the poignant feelings of our minds, to the more solemn observance of this day; this is that period: when an outrage so glaring, and so offensive to justice, humanity, and religion, rests no longer on the tradition of past times, but is again submitted, with additional atrocity,

to

to the indignant obfervation of mankind: when the example of this day, inftead of deterring other nations from fimilar acts of injufice and enormity, has been recently held up as an object of applaufe and imitation: and when the leading principles, which occafioned this confummation of national infatuation and depravity, in a neighbouring country, have been induftrioufly promulgated, as great and precious gifts, through every part of this happy and enlightened kingdom.

THE importance of thefe confiderations to our prefent welfare may well lead us to a nearer examination of the peculiar circumftances of thofe times, which terminated in the difaftrous event, on account of which we are called upon to humble ourfelves before the Supreme Being, for fo heinous a violation of the principles and duties of our holy religion.

WHATEVER were the errors in the beginning of the reign of that unfortunate Prince, whofe fate is the fubject of this day's humiliation; whatever powers had been exercifed

on the part of the crown, unauthorized by the established law, and the true principles of our form of government ; it is evident, that all claims to such powers had at length been clearly renounced : additional protection had been given to the liberties of the subject : ample satisfaction had been made for the encroachments on the privileges of Parliament, or, on the personal liberty of individuals ; the frequent resort to the advice of Parliament had been finally established, and a readiness manifested to repair every breach which had been made in the constitution.

If public security alone, therefore, had been the object of contention, or if the spirit of innovation, once raised into a system of action, and communicated to all the factious instruments necessary to its operation, had been capable of controul, the real friends of their country, whose judgment was sound and dispassionate, would have felt the important value of the security which had been accomplished, and would have abstained from incurring the risk of that fearful convulsion which afterwards ensued. But the redress of grievances,

vances, and the solid advantages which had been procured, were incapable, it seems, of restraining the ambitious and daring views of the leaders of those times. Discontents once raised are not easily quieted; turbulent passions once roused, are too impatient to be subject, on a sudden, to correction and restraint. Political considerations were also inflamed by an intemperate religious zeal. It was not deemed sufficient that the prerogative of the crown was now confined within narrower limits, that it was more effectually checked from infringing on the freedom of the people; the people were to be instigated to the assumption and exercise of powers destructive of the constitutional prerogative of the crown: the removal of grievances was to be succeeded by that entire change of the whole system of our civil and religious government, which terminated in its temporary subversion. Accordingly the demands of the Parliament increased proportionably to the compliance of the Prince: one concession was extorted after another, till the executive government was so reduced and enfeebled, as to be incapable of maintaining its due balance in the Constitution.

DURING

DURING the succeeding civil war, the repeated efforts on the part of the crown to stop its progress, and to restore tranquillity, were rendered abortive by the exorbitant claims and expectations of the parliament; till after a long and dreadful conflict, and a lavish profusion of blood and treasure, the King, now a prisoner in his own dominions, and incapable of making any terms short of a dereliction of the civil and religious liberties of the country, at length became a sacrifice to the unlimited ambition, and relentless cruelty and injustice of his enemies.

WHEN the contest between the King and the Parliament was concluded, what was the condition of the nation? Had its liberties been better protected, when placed in the hands of those who exercised the supreme authority of the state? Had the property of the country at large been less subject to encroachments than formerly? Were the people more secure of personal freedom, of liberty in religious worship? Did they participate more largely of private and political blessings? — Directly the reverse. Before the civil war broke

out, the just grounds of dissatisfaction had been entirely and completely removed : under its new masters, the nation groaned under all the devastation and oppression of multiplied and afflictive tyrannies : a difference in religious or political opinions was attended by a sequestration of lands and revenues on the part of the laity, by that of ecclesiastical benefices on the part of the clergy : the decrees of the Star-chamber were rigorously-supplied by the establishment of numerous inferior tribunals, which, being endued with vast and unrestrained powers, were calculated to gratify all the propensities of avarice, revenge, and persecution.

SUCH were the new provisions for the liberties and happiness of the country. Fortunate had it been for the nation at large, if, divested of the influence of religious fanaticism, and the impetuous zeal for a licentious freedom, its leaders had not engaged in projects of extending the liberty of the subject at the expence of those prerogatives indispensable to the general happiness : projects which terminated in imposing bondage on the kingdom, in com-

mitting an outrage to the constitution by overpowering and destroying one of the essential and vital parts of it, and in contaminating the nation with the guilt of blood.

THE consideration of these affecting events, naturally suggests to our minds some useful and important reflections.

IT will appear then how cautious every true friend of constitutional freedom should be, in raising a spirit of discontent in the public mind: the expected advantages may be specious, but the consequent evils may, in fact, far outweigh the most sanguine hopes of real benefit: besides this, it should never be forgotten, that where dissatisfaction and disquiet are once generally excited, no power may remain in force sufficient to controul their effects.

WE may also learn, that the machine of government is too vast and complicated to admit of being regulated on plausible and imposing speculations: a judgment of its properties must be formed on the solid basis of observation and experience.

As an essential part of the system of civil government, the care and protection of sound religion must ever be a most important consideration, with reference even to the temporal interests of mankind: the wise precepts, and weighty sanctions of religion have a powerful efficacy beyond the authority of human laws. Sound religion will ever strengthen our loyalty and genuine patriotism: under its influence, we shall “*(d)* SUBMIT OURSELVES TO EVERY “ORDINANCE OF MAN FOR THE LORD’S SAKE:” the delusive zeal of fanaticism is from its very nature uncertain, uncontrollable, and therefore always dangerous: the madness of irreligion is still more certainly destructive. Pure religion, being the only safe ground of confidence between man and man, forms in itself the true foundation of good order and security in civil society: it is ordained by the appointment of a wise and merciful God, that “*(e)* RIGHTEOUSNESS SHOULD EXALT A NATION:” to the Israelites the Lord declared, by the mouth of his servant Moses, “*(f)* IT SHALL COME TO PASS, IF THOU

(d) 1 Peter, ii. 13.

(e) Prov. xiv. 34.

(f) Deut. xxviii. 1.

“ SHALT HEARKEN DILIGENTLY UNTO THE VOICE OF
 “ THE LORD THY GOD, TO OBSERVE AND TO DO ALL
 “ HIS COMMANDMENTS WHICH I COMMAND THEE THIS
 “ DAY, THAT THE LORD THY GOD WILL SET THEE
 “ ON HIGH ABOVE ALL NATIONS OF THE EARTH.”

ON the other hand, Experience and Revelation unite in teaching us that national punishments are the appointed consequence of national offences : the crimes of individuals are often followed by temporal penalties, tho' the final and most dreadful retribution is reserved to the allotments of another world ; but the judicial inflictions on the offences of whole states, considered as such, can take place only in this life : in some instances these inflictions ensue in what appear to be the usual order and connexion of causes and effects, established by the constitution of Providence ; in other instances, they are the more extraordinary and visible interferences of a powerful and offended God. The judgment pronounced by the prophet Jeremiah, on a nation obstinate in iniquity, in lust, and irreligion, is a fearful warning of God's resentment of public wickedness.

“ SHALL

“(g) SHALL I NOT VISIT FOR THESE THINGS ? SAITH
 “ THE LORD : AND SHALL NOT MY SOUL BE AVENGED ON
 SUCH A NATION AS THIS ? ” If no higher motive, there-
 fore, can teach us the duties and importance of religion,
 a love of our country may, and awaken in us the glorious
 ambition of endeavouring to draw down the blessings of
 God on our country, by a practical and uniform piety.

As a Nation, therefore, the exercise of Christianity must
 always be “ our wisdom and understanding : ” the sad but
 instructive event of this day, will also impress on our minds
 another truth, which addresses itself immediately to the
 feelings and apprehension of every man ; it will teach us,
 as individuals, the inestimable value and consolation of the
 hopes and prospects assured to us by the gospel in every
 condition, and under the most afflictive trials of life ; for if,
 in the time of prosperity, it be the province of religion to
 direct our views and gratitude to the beneficent and true
 author of it, and to regulate all our enjoyments by the
 wholesome restraints of wisdom and moderation ; so, under

the pressure of adversity, it will be found the only effectual support : at such a period the truly religious man “ (*b*) WILL NOT BE AFRAID OF ANY EVIL TIDINGS, FOR “ HIS HEART STANDETH FAST, AND BELIEVETH IN “ THE LORD.” “ (*i*) YEA, THOUGH HE WALK THROUGH “ THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH,” even in death itself “ HE WILL FEAR NO EVIL.”

FURTHER, the true meaning and value of civil liberty will be best understood from those melancholy instances in which mankind has suffered from its abuse : it will be found to be equally abhorrent from licentiousness and despotism, and to be inseparable from such constraints of law, as are found experimentally conducive to the public security and welfare.

WE shall, also, be taught, that of all the systems ever devised by human wisdom, for the maintenance of sound genuine liberty, none has been found comparable to that mixed form of government, which we have the happiness

(*b*) Psalm cxii. 7.

(*i*) Psalm xxiii. 4.

to enjoy. When monarchy has been abolished, a democratic tyranny has prevailed, and scattered terrors, oppressions, convulsions: then “ (k) THE PEOPLE ARE OPPRESSED EVERY ONE BY ANOTHER, AND EVERY ONE BY HIS NEIGHBOUR; THE CHILD BEHAVES HIMSELF PROUDLY AGAINST THE ANCIENT, AND THE BASE AGAINST THE HONOURABLE.” It is by the mutual controul of the great constitutional powers on each other, that national happiness is attained, by affording to the whole the most useful energies of each component part, and thus uniting what must ever be inseparable, “ Liberty and Order.”

THANKS be to God, we are not insensible to these blessings: the nation is not now liable to the reproach, with which it was branded by the noble historian of the great rebellion; who, having described the period preceding the discontents which led to it, as one, “ *when this kingdom enjoyed the fullest measure of felicity, that any people of any age, for so long time together, had been blessed with,*

(k) Isaiah iii. 5.

“ to the wonder, and envy of all the other parts of Christendom,” then adds, “ * *All these blessings could but enable, not compel, us to be happy; we wanted that sense, acknowledgment, and value of our own happiness, which all but we had: and took pains to make, when we could not find, ourselves miserable.*”

WE, in this country, and at this time, are not only happy, but know that we are so: we entertain every “ *sense, acknowledgment, and value*” of our happiness.

THE Country in great prosperity, and protected in the enjoyment of it: firm in its own strength and powerful in its resources: our manufactures flourishing, our commerce and navigation extended, and the public revenues increased, beyond all example of former ages: the administration of justice so pure and irreproachable as to ensure to all ranks the fullest security of their lives, their properties, and their characters: an established religion encouraged and protected by law; a freedom of religious opinions and of religious worship granted to

* Clarendon Hist. Book i. p. 60. fol. ed. 1704.

persons of all persuasions: and all these blessings enjoyed under the authority of a Sovereign, whose private and public virtues have long and firmly established him in the hearts and affections of his subjects. These, I say, are blessings which all descriptions of persons, not only enjoy, but “*acknowledge and value:*” they have not suffered themselves to be deluded; they have not allowed all the wicked diligence which has been employed, to be so successful in its efforts, as to make them think themselves miserable. The very attempt has been sufficient to rouse the exertions and loyalty of the country, and to excite men, however generally differing in political sentiments, or divided by religious opinions, to express, as with one united voice, their sense of the great and unrivalled benefits and privileges which they possess, and their fixed determination strenuously to defend that constitution, which, under the favour of Providence, is the distinguished source of all these blessings.

THE very sense of our felicity is in itself a blessing, for which we should be most thankful; “(1) HAPPY ARE

“ THE PEOPLE THAT ARE IN SUCH A CASE, YEA BLESSED ARE THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE THE LORD FOR THEIR GOD.”

OUR gratitude to the Almighty will be shewn most acceptably, if a sense of his benefits incite us to a more diligent and conscientious discharge of our religious and civil duties : if it induce us to adorn the holy religion brought down from heaven by the Son of God himself, with all those virtues and graces which it enjoins, and, thus to recommend it to mankind, not only by our profession but also by our example. Thus shall we continually be shewing forth our thankfulness for the numberless marks of mercy which the Almighty hath vouchsafed us : thus shall we adopt the best means of procuring their continuance to ourselves, and to our posterity, and of averting the evil of those calamities which we this day lament, as the scourge and reproach of our nation.

F I N I S.

A
S E R M O N

Preached before the HONOURABLE
HOUSE of COMMONS,

AT
ST. MARGARET'S, WESTMINSTER,

ON
THURSDAY, JANUARY 30, 1794:
Being the Day appointed to be observed as the Day of the
MARTYRDOM of King CHARLES I.

BY THE REVEREND THOMAS HAY, A.M.

CHAPLAIN TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

L O N D O N:
PRINTED FOR J. WALTER, CHARING-CROSS.

M. DCC. XCIV.

ISAIAH, III. 5.

THE PEOPLE SHALL BE OPPRESSED EVERY ONE
BY ANOTHER, AND EVERY ONE BY HIS NEIGH-
BOUR: THE CHILD SHALL BEHAVE HIMSELF
PROUDLY AGAINST THE ANCIENT, AND THE
BASE AGAINST THE HONOURABLE.

ONE of the great ends and designs of all Civil Government, and that which is amply provided for in every well-modelled system, is the security of individuals from the fraud or violence of each other: if the frame of it be defective, the administration of it weak and inefficient, the evils of confusion and mutual oppression will ensue, which are inherent in a state of unprotected society, and which a system of subordination was intended to prevent or redress. When all restraints of law and authority are removed, the selfish

inclinations and turbulent passions of the most abandoned will reign uncontrouled ; the plainest rights of justice will be wholly disregarded ; vice will be exalted, and virtue debased ; no respect will be preserved for those various claims, which the wisdom and virtue of mankind and the institutions of society have conspired to consecrate ; no deference will be paid to age, to talents, to situation, or character.

SUCH a state of anarchy was the calamitous sentence, which (according to the denunciation of the prophet Ifaiah) the Jews were to incur by their aggravated iniquity: they were to be exposed to the various evils of a broken and feeble government, and at length to the rigours of captivity in a foreign land. “ * I WILL
 “ GIVE CHILDREN TO BE THEIR PRINCES, AND
 “ BABES SHALL RULE OVER THEM. AND THE
 “ PEOPLE SHALL BE OPPRESSED EVERY ONE BY
 “ ANOTHER, AND EVERY ONE BY HIS NEIGHBOUR:
 “ THE CHILD SHALL BEHAVE HIMSELF PROUDLY
 “ AGAINST THE ANCIENT, AND THE BASE

* Ifaiah, iii. 4—8.

" AGAINST THE HONOURABLE. WHEN A MAN
 " SHALL TAKE HOLD OF HIS BROTHER OF THE
 " HOUSE OF HIS FATHER, SAYING, THOU HAST
 " CLOTHING, BE THOU OUR RULER, AND LET
 " THIS RUIN BE UNDER THY HAND: IN THAT
 " DAY SHALL HE SWEAR, SAYING, I WILL NOT
 " BE AN HEALER; FOR IN MY HOUSE IS NEITHER
 " BREAD NOR CLOTHING; MAKE ME NOT A RULER
 " OF THE PEOPLE. FOR JERUSALEM IS RUINED
 " AND JUDAH IS FALLEN: BECAUSE THEIR TONGUE
 " AND THEIR DOINGS ARE AGAINST THE LORD;
 " TO PROVOKE THE EYES OF HIS GLORY."

In the instance of the Jews, the displeasure of the Almighty was provoked by their impiety, attended with the most heinous ingratitude; part of the punishment denounced against them was, a subjection to the most profligate amongst themselves, a slavery to the most grievous tyranny. The crimes of this country in the last century had their rise chiefly in an insensibility to the blessings which it actually enjoyed, in a licentious spirit of innovation, and in the selfish and rapacious views of private ambition: the wretchedness which

these crimes in their progress drew down upon this nation, was also a most humiliating and grievous tyranny, the tyranny of fellow-subjects, the oppression one of another.

To recall to our minds the miseries with which we were surrounded, and the errors and crimes from which they originated, and more especially the consummation of them in the dreadful event of this day; to deprecate the Divine displeasure by the expression of a public and national sorrow, and to derive instruction the most important and salutary from the consideration of past sufferings; these are among the great duties and purposes of this solemnity.—A retrospect to the afflictions which we have endured, is also adapted to awaken in our minds a general sense of the national evils attending national guilt, and to remind us of the value of those privileges and blessings, which as a nation we at this hour possess, and for which our unbounded gratitude is due to Him who ruleth over all the earth.

VARIOUS were the motives by which men of very
 † different

different descriptions were unhappily led to co-operate in acts, which in the event deprived the Crown of its due authority, of that weight in the scale of government not more essentially necessary for the maintenance of its own dignity than for the protection of the subject, and which at length led to that deep and heinous crime of injustice and treason, then unparalleled in the history of the world. Various were the circumstances which favoured the success of projects to which those motives gave birth; the most remarkable of which was the prevalence of religious fanaticism: but in some instances, their success was promoted by men of the most opposite denominations; for, if amongst the circumstances which contributed to the subsequent events, we number the vigilance, the activity, and the artifices of the enemies of our Constitution, we must at the same time also lament, the supine indifference and negligence of its friends; the defect of a provident and circumspect attention to the first appearances of discontent and tumult; and the want of such directors of the public counsels, as, "*(a) being unawed by any guilt of their own, could have*

(a) Clarendon's Hist. Book iv. p. 254. fol. ed. 1704.

*“watched over other men’s, and informed, encouraged,
 “and influenced those who stood well inclined to the public
 “peace.”*

WHATEVER these motives, and these circumstances were, certain it is, that men upright in intention, but defective in judgment, undesignedly contributed to the calamities which followed, either from an unreasonable distrust of that protection to their liberties and religion which had been secured to them before an appeal was made to arms, or from an insensibility to the magnitude of those dangers, which inevitably threatened the very existence both of their civil and religious liberties, when undefended by established forms, and the sanction of a legitimate system of government.

THE principal authors of these distractions had soon abundant reason to deplore either the want of integrity, or the want of foresight, which had led them to alter the whole frame and spirit of the Constitution, by the unwarrantable depression of one of the estates of the government: they themselves were amongst the first who experienced the evils of their own counsels, and
 discovered,

discovered, when it was too late, that with all their groundless clamour, their efforts, and their diligence, they had only laboured to deprive themselves of all substantial freedom. Men of more moderate views countenanced and promoted changes, which in their effects recoiled upon themselves: their character and their influence were lent to measures, which first indeed accomplished their own destruction, but which finally contributed to effect the ruin of the nation:

“ * THE LEADERS OF THE PEOPLE CAUSED THEM
 “ TO ERR, AND THEY THAT WERE LED OF THEM
 “ WERE DESTROYED.” Of the general unhappiness of those times, we cannot have a stronger or fairer testimony, than that of one who had signalized himself by the part he sustained in those very commotions, the consequences of which he so forcibly laments; who, in the midst of the anarchy which succeeded the struggle, thus exclaims: “ *(b) After the expence of so much blood
 “ and treasure, all the difference that can be discerned
 “ between our former and our present estate is but this,*

* Isaiah, ix. 16.

(b) Vindication of the Character and Conduct of Sir William Waller, written by himself, p. 29.

*“ that besoretime, under the complaint of a slavery, we
 “ lived like freemen ; and now, under the notion of a
 “ freedom, we live like slaves, enforced by continual taxes
 “ and oppressions to maintain and feed our own miseries.”*

To any one who even slightly reviews the history of these times, one striking circumstance obviously presents itself: in the course of those measures, which in themselves were calculated to produce, and which in fact did produce a variety of evils; during the most daring encroachments on the legal prerogative of the Crown, and in the actual assumption of powers the most dangerous and foreign to the genius of our Constitution; it was repeatedly declared, and at times most solemnly attested, as the ground alledged for these new violences, “ (c) *That the Parliament would maintain and defend his Majesty’s royal person, honour and estate ; as also its own power, and privileges, and the lawful rights and liberties of the subject :*” — “ (d) *That the chief end of all their counsels and resolutions was the establishing the safety of religion,*

(c) Protestation taken by both Houses, A. D. 1641.

(d) See Protestation and Declaration of the Lords and Commons in Parliament, Oct. 22, 1642.

“ and

*“ and the fruition of the laws and liberties of the kingdom,
 “ without any intention or desire to hurt or injure his
 “ Majesty, either in his person or just power.”*

IN whatever light we view these professions of loyalty and moderation, they are well deserving our attention: suppose them to be insincere; and how can we restrain our indignation against such deliberate deceit? against so many repeated acts of base and aggravated hypocrisy? so much the more odious, as they were practised by men invested with a great and solemn trust, in direct violation of every principle of duty, by which they ought to have been influenced; who sought to gratify their ambition, their malice, their avarice, or their vanity, at the expence of the dearest interests of their country; who were labouring to subvert that very system of government which they professed to admire, and by insidious and false representations of their own views, did not hesitate to extol themselves as the generous advocates of that very freedom, which (through the influence of violent or selfish passions) they were hastening to undermine and destroy. Suppose these professions to be indeed sincere; what do we then collect,

but that persons of the purest, and best intentions, they who in their hearts were real friends to the laws and government of the country, but who unhappily would not rest satisfied in the redress of real grievances, were induced to give the weight of their sanction and authority to measures, the tendency of which they did not foresee, and the consequences of which they could not avert; and thus, unable to extinguish those flames which they themselves had kindled, at length became the unwilling instruments of guilt, of oppression, and misery to the nation?

BUT regard these professions either as honest or insincere, regard those who avowed them as actuated either by public or selfish motives; how distressful must have been the feelings, how bitter the disappointment, of the most considerable of those who, from various views, first plunged their country into all the horrors of civil dissention!—Did they feel a just respect for the Crown, and for its Constitutional powers? The sad cause of this day's humiliation marks too surely the melancholy issue of those measures which they adopted under this impression.—Were they solicitous to secure
the

the privileges of Parliament? From the time the Monarchy was in fact subverted, the Parliament itself lost its independence, it became enslaved to a crafty, a powerful and insulting faction: its freedom was overborne by the tyranny of external violence, excited and cherished by the machinations of internal artifice and intrigue: there was an end of all that calm deliberative wisdom (that fruitful source of public benefit) for the exercise of which it is in itself so eminently adapted.—Were they inflamed with a zeal in the cause of civil liberty? The liberty of the subject was annihilated: the estates of many were wholly confiscated, of others much impaired; the property, the personal freedom, and even the lives of all, were no longer under the equal protection of law, but subjected to the absolute will and disposal of violent and arbitrary masters. Having been harassed by the authority of a predominant party, the country became a prey to a bold and lawless usurper; and after his death only exchanged the tyranny of one, for a state of anarchy arising from the pretensions of many.—Were they prompted by an enthusiastic ardour in the cause of sound religion? In the event the most learned and sober-minded ministers of the church

were insulted, proscribed, and banished; their property sequestered, the very sanctuaries prophaned: the Christian dispensation was debased by the vilest hypocrisy; and by a strange perversion became the sanction of blasphemy, of rebellion, and persecution.—Or, were the first authors of those counsels influenced by motives wholly unjustifiable? by selfish interest, or unprincipled ambition? Many of these very men were themselves imprisoned, or secluded, were degraded, insulted, and oppressed, by a faction at the disposal of leaders still more aspiring and more powerful: for “* VIOLENCE WAS IN THE LAND, RULER AGAINST RULER.”

THUS do the evils experienced by our forefathers hold forth an awful warning to men of all times, to consider well the possible consequences of political innovations, and to weigh calmly those changes which they may be inclined to countenance. In the “beginning of strife” wise men will endeavour to separate pretended from real motives, and will not suffer themselves to be deluded by a specious application of terms: they will carefully examine principles both in them-

* Jeremiah, LI. 46.

selves and in their possible effects, principles which, though flattering and imposing in their first appearance, may upon examination be discovered to be founded in fallacy, and replete with danger: they will look forward to those plain consequences of measures, which are rendered probable by reason and experience, lest they become a prey to hypocrisy and fraud, and at length involve themselves and their country in destruction. The nature of the measures themselves should also be seriously regarded: no expectation of future good should be suffered for a moment to support or palliate such means, as in their own nature are unwarrantable: the good to be expected must at all events be contingent; the evil atchieved for its attainment real and certain: “ * TO DO EVIL THAT GOOD MAY COME ” is a maxim strongly reprobated in Scripture: the various objects of public, as well as of private good, should be pursued by such means only, as are consonant to Law, to Morality, and Religion. To secure ourselves from being deceived either by persons, or things, it becomes important that we should practise that first point of wisdom, of not being deceived by ourselves; we must learn to be ac-

* Romans, III. 8.

quainted with our own hearts, to detect the frailties, and subdue the violence of our own minds, and to restrain all those irregular affections which transport men from one extravagance to another, till at length they may be incited to the desperate resolution of raising themselves on the ruin of their country. By such a salutary acquaintance with ourselves, by such a manly exercise of virtue, we may fail indeed in the gratification of guilty passions, but shall insure a solid and superior satisfaction, a satisfaction arising from the very conquest of ourselves, as well as from the consciousness of those dangers we may have averted, or of those blessings which we have contributed to impart, or to confirm to mankind.

If the guilt which was incurred, if the calamities which were provoked, and the wholesome lesson to be derived from the review of those calamities in the last century, had been duly regarded; heightened enormities of the same dye, aggravated miseries of the same description, would not have been presented to the astonishment and shame of the present age: the most sacred laws both

of human and divine institution would not have been violated by the murder of a mild and beneficent Sovereign: nor would the frantic and impious perpetrators of this outrage, instigated by the effects of their own injustice, inflamed by their own cruelty, have recently committed an act of similar enormity, with every concomitant circumstance of unmanly insult, of unprecedented barbarity, and horror. They would not have founded and cemented the dominion of successive factions in pretended crimes, mock trials, and inevitable destruction: nor would they by repeated deeds of massacre, of proscription, of plunder, and impiety, have desolated their own land, and by means both of fraud and force attempted to diffuse their crimes and wretchedness among surrounding nations: thus, holding forth in these calamities a memorable example, not only of the dreadful evils attending democratic oppression, but also of those which result from the renunciation of God's revealed will.

HAPPY is it for the whole race of men, that He who is the great Governor among the nations, continually watches them with a gracious and protecting Providence. Individuals, or societies of men, may deny,
but

but they cannot elude his power: however enormous their impieties may be, though they be enemies to their God, and to the bonds of social order which He has sanctioned among men, though they be hostile to all government human and divine, yea though “ * THEY
 “ SPEAK GREAT WORDS AGAINST THE MOST HIGH,
 “ AND WEAR OUT THE SAINTS OF THE MOST HIGH,
 “ AND THINK TO CHANGE TIMES AND LAWS,” still
 “ † GOD REIGNETH OVER ALL, IN HIS HAND IS
 “ POWER AND MIGHT:” the administration of the moral as of the natural world is under his government: the commotions of both are subject to his controul: “ ‡ THE LORD IS KING, BE THE PEOPLE
 “ NEVER SO IMPATIENT:” “ || THOUGH THE WAVES
 “ OF THE SEA TOSS THEMSELVES, YET CAN THEY
 “ NOT PREVAIL,” yea though they be “ § MIGHTY,
 “ AND RAGE HORRIBLY, YET THE LORD WHO
 “ DWELLETH ON HIGH IS MIGHTIER.”

THE page of civil history is written for our admonition; what is now passing under our observation,

* Daniel, VII. 25. † 1 Chron. XXIX. 12. ‡ Psalm XCIX. 1.

|| Jerem. V. 22. § Psalm XCIII. 5.

suggests also matter of much useful reflection. If the records of the former afflictions of our own country tend to shew us the dangers of fanatical intemperance; the events which have taken place in a neighbouring nation, display the more lamentable effects of irreligion. We may from hence derive a strengthened conviction of the indispensable necessity of true Religion, to the cause of civil government and social order: we may from hence learn, that without its restraints, no creature is more ferocious than Man: his affections debased; his understanding perverted; his will corrupt; his views selfish and detestable; the means adopted to attain those views unjust, oppressive and sanguinary, and such as cannot be persisted in without the sacrifice of every good and generous propensity of his nature. The importance of Christianity therefore is strongly and experimentally evinced. It was a truth declared by our Blessed Saviour, " * IF ANY MAN WILL DO GOD'S WILL, HE SHALL KNOW OF MY DOCTRINE WHETHER IT BE OF GOD." That virtuous practice tends essentially to the establishment of a Christian Faith, was well known to Him, who was intimately acquainted with our na-

* John, VII. 17.

ture, who “ * KNEW WHAT WAS IN MAN.” We, in this age, have seen practical impiety, under the guidance and in the garb of something which calls itself Philosophy, advance to an open denial of the truth of Christianity, and even of every principle of Natural Religion: men have renounced what they dreaded to believe, and denied the existence of a Deity, because they trembled at his judgments. Wickedness is at once the cause, and an advancement in wickedness, the effect of infidelity: “ † THE FOOL WHO IS CORRUPT, AND ABOMINABLE IN HIS DOINGS,” will wish to “ SAY IN HIS HEART, THERE IS NO GOD;” when he has once ceased “ ‡ TO RETAIN GOD IN HIS KNOWLEDGE,” he becomes, without controul, still more corrupt, and still more abominable: and this is the natural course of human actions; moral virtue can be firmly grounded only on religious obedience. “ || HE HATH SHEWED THEE, O MAN, WHAT IS GOOD, AND WHAT DOTHTH THE LORD REQUIRE OF THEE, BUT TO DO JUSTLY, AND

* John, II. 25.

† Psalm XIV. 1, 2.

‡ Rom. I. 28.

|| Micah, VI. 8.

“ TO LOVE MERCY, AND TO WALK HUMBLY WITH
 “ THY GOD ?” But unless these precepts are observed
 on the ground of being “ REQUIRED” by the Al-
 mighty, they will not be observed at all: where a
 sincere and sober sense of religion is wanting, it is
 evident, both from history, and our own observation,
 that as men do not “ WALK HUMBLY WITH THEIR
 “ GOD,” so is it not to be expected, that they will be
 disposed upon any uniform principle, either “ TO DO
 “ JUSTLY, OR LOVE MERCY.”

: EXTRAVAGANCY or error in religious opinions, are
 not however confined in their effects to their influence
 on morality; they have frequently been strongly united
 with maxims of civil policy. In the last century en-
 thusiasm was the dupe of hypocrisy, and of a delibe-
 rate enmity to the constituted authorities of the state:
 in the present age, and amongst the people who fur-
 nish the most striking and useful lesson at the present
 day, maxims of infidelity have been industriously cir-
 culated, for the purpose of undermining the whole
 system of government, religious and civil: in both in-
 stances false positions respecting religion have been

made the instrument of civil discord, and of consequent misery to the people.

SUCH is the nature of the political body, the various members (each having its proper use and office) are so fitly framed, and connected together, “that IF
“ONE MEMBER SUFFER, ALL THE MEMBERS SUFFER WITH IT.” For many wise and beneficent purposes God has formed us for society, and for a state of mutual obligation, and dependence. He has endued mankind with various talents, faculties, and dispositions, adapted to the purposes of various ranks, and stations: He has ordained that the peace, and happiness of society should materially depend, on the manner in which the respective duties of these sundry orders, and degrees of men, are discharged: under these circumstances, what is the proper aim of any system of government? Is it to arrogate to itself the attempt of interrupting this wise arrangement, established in the world by its great Creator? or is it not rather to provide most effectually for the maintenance of these fixed and settled laws? and by powerfully curbing the violence of passion; by restraining the vices of the human mind, by afford-
ing

ing a free scope to industry, and encouragement to virtue, to protect the various classes of society, and enable them to effect that general happiness which they were intended to promote? But as it is an acknowledged object under our own, and every other wise form of Government, as well as in the frame of our holy Religion, to impose a restraint on human passions, hence it has happened, that men of ungoverned minds (impatient of that controul which is calculated to check all their ambitious, and dangerous projects) have at different times laboured to subvert the one, and to corrupt or set aside the other: in order to accomplish this, they have misrepresented the views and principles of both. Legitimate Government (which well constituted, and duly administered, is indispensable to the security of society) has been branded with the name of tyranny: all Religion been despised as error or superstition: the most gross and barbarous iniquity sanctified by the name of Justice, or the pretence of necessity: the exercise of unheard-of oppression gloried in; as a zeal for liberty: blasphemy dignified with the titles of Reason, and Philosophy: in the language of Scripture,

“ * EVIL IS CALLED GOOD, AND GOOD EVIL ; BIT-
 “ TER IS PUT FOR SWEET, AND SWEET FOR BIT-
 “ TER.” If you enquire into the cause of this per-
 version, it is truly assigned in the Gospel: “ † THIS IS
 “ THE CONDEMNATION, THAT LIGHT IS COME IN-
 “ TO THE WORLD, AND MEN LOVED DARKNESS RA-
 “ THER THAN LIGHT, BECAUSE THEIR DEEDS WERE
 “ EVIL.” Do you wish to examine further, and to ex-
 plore the consequences of these depravities? “ ‡ IF
 “ ONE LOOK INTO THE LAND, BEHOLD DARKNESS
 “ AND SORROW:” “ § ALL JOY IS DARKENED, THE
 “ MIRTH OF THE LAND IS GONE; THEY THAT
 “ DWELL THEREIN ARE DESOLATE.”

BUT what is this which men do, when with all their ostentation of enlightened wisdom they reject the necessity of revealed religion? What do they, but reject that, the value of which was justly appreciated, by the wisest and best Heathens? They lived indeed in a state of great obscurity with respect to religious knowledge, but they did not scorn that glimmering light which was

* Isaiah, V. 20.

† John, III. 19.

‡ Isaiah, V. 30.

§ Isaiah, XXIV. 11, 6.

to direct them, however imperfectly, in the regulation of their conduct: “ * AND THE TIMES OF THIS IGNORANCE GOD WINKED AT.” But to renounce that dispensation, which the Almighty deemed of such high importance, as to cause it to be foretold from the very creation of the world, at fundry times in a series of prophecy: to the introduction of which not only the Jewish economy, but also the successive aggrandizement of each of the great empires of the world, were rendered subservient: to reject that Religion, which God sent his beloved Son to make manifest to mankind, that which declares to us our proper relation to God and man, and which enjoins those duties incumbent on us towards both; which holds forth the promise of indulgence and assistance to human frailty; which offers the one only atonement for the neglect of duty, and the commission of sin; that which, duly observed, will improve and perfect our nature, and at once enable us to pass usefully through this world, with the most exalted hopes, and the most transcendent views, and at the same time prepare us for the enjoyment of a future state of existence; whose

* Acts, XVII. 30.

authority is evinced to us, as well by the unexampled purity of its doctrines, as by the clear attestation of miracles and prophecy: to reject such a Religion, and with such numerous and weighty claims to our assent, argues a complication of ingratitude, of wickedness, and folly, which, a respect for the honour as well as for the interests of human nature, would incline, nay almost compel us to think incredible. But, setting aside the inestimable privileges of Religion, it should never be forgotten, that the great points which it inculcates, are not proposed as objects of our choice, but as commands which claim our obedience. Acts of piety, of charity, and self-government, are not acts of indifference, which we are at liberty either to perform or decline; they are enforced by a plain and positive law, to which (as in the case of other laws) we must conform our conduct, or be liable to the penalties annexed to disobedience; and it concerns us seriously to consider the awful sentence pronounced by our Lord, on obstinate infidelity: “* I AM COME A LIGHT INTO
 “ THE WORLD, THAT WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH ON
 “ ME SHOULD NOT ABIDE IN DARKNESS: HE THAT

* John, XII. 46, 48.

“ REJECTETH

“REJECTETH ME, AND RECEIVETH NOT MY
 “WORDS, HATH ONE THAT JUDGETH HIM: THE
 “WORD THAT I HAVE SPOKEN, THE SAME SHALL
 “JUDGE HIM IN THE LAST DAY.”

UNDER a full impresson of the importance of Christianity, to private happiness and public prosperity, and of the mischiefs which have accrued to mankind, both from the abuse and the contempt of it, every thinking man will feel it of especial consequence, more particularly in the times in which we live, to be well founded in the knowledge of Christian truths, and to be prepared against every attempt, which may be made either openly to assault, or insidiously to undermine them. The evidences of our Religion have the first claim to our calm and attentive consideration: if the result of this consideration, and enquiry, be (as it unquestionably will be) a conviction of the Divine authority of our Faith, it then becomes an unavoidable conclusion, that human reason, contracted and limited as it is, should submit itself to the dictates of infinite intelligence. As the reverence which is due to the revealed word of the Deity obliges us to conclude, that every

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thing which proceeds from that sacred source is an unquestionable and eternal truth ; if any portion of Divine knowledge which God hath been pleased to communicate, be above the comprehension of our narrow faculties, this will not be matter of objection to its truth, but a ground of submissive reverence : we shall receive with thankfulness what is revealed, and from a fixed sense of the wisdom and goodness of God, conclude, that every revealed truth is requisite either for our instruction, for our support and encouragement in virtue here, or in some manner necessary as preparatory to our eternal state hereafter. Impressed with the inestimable value of religion, and with a sense of the proper province of Reason, of its powers, but above all of its weakness, we shall employ it only as subservient to Christianity, not for the purpose of superseding it. Conscious that the whole of a Revelation (if it be really such) must necessarily be true, we shall not suffer our veneration for revealed truths to be affected either by the shafts of ridicule, or the sophistry of science, whether the busy pride of human reason be employed in attempting to subvert the whole system of our faith collectively, or separately to invade any of its acknowledged

ed doctrines; or, be as perversely occupied, in endeavouring to debase the moral precepts, and to weaken or deny the sanctions of the Gospel. Let every considerate man be cautious of refining in matters of religion: let him impartially weigh the necessity and value of the whole, and of every part of Revelation: upon his own observation and experience let him determine, whether human nature be such, as to render any of the directions or restraints of Christianity superfluous. Is the actual state of the world such (without any exaggerated view either of human infirmity, or of the corruption of the times in which we live) as to induce him to pronounce that Christianity, as we have received it, with all its doctrines, its precepts, and its sanctions, is more than sufficient to deter men from vice, and to influence them to virtue?

To conclude.--During the civil dissensions of the last century, the nation experienced many and grievous oppressions; oppressions harassing every rank of men; originally introduced, and successfully continued, under the colour of religious zeal: in our own age, we have observed the afflictions of a country groaning under

the yoke of popular tyranny, and at the same instant distracted by all the evils of anarchy; we have observed the calamities which have resulted from the infatuation of infidelity. In the mean time, what is our own situation? We, amongst all the nations of the earth, are distinguished for the possession of a mixed form of Government, in which the powers of each branch of the legislature are plainly defined; and withal so admirably constituted, that by the mutual controul and counteraction of its several parts, it precludes the evils, and ensures the benefits, attending each of the three forms of which it is composed, in their simple and unmixed state: a system, extending protection to all the various members of the community, eminently marked by its energy, its wisdom, and its virtue. We are possessed of a reformed Religion, established under the auspices of learning and moderation, equally remote from superstition and infidelity. But, all the benefits to be derived to a state, even under the protection of the most perfect practical government, must still depend on the virtue of the individuals who compose it; obedience to the will of God is the only solid foundation of all moral duty; revelation is the measure of that obedi-

ence: it is of the utmost consequence, therefore, both as individuals, and as members of the state, that we make revealed religion the rule of our conduct; that we guard against the corruptions of enthusiasm and superstition on the one hand, and against the encroachments of infidelity on the other; that each individual in his own life, and by his own example, should cultivate and promote the practice of virtue on its proper and only firm basis, the principles of Christianity; and by thus enlarging the sphere of virtue, extend the operation of those principles, which alone, from their nature, and influence, can render a nation united in itself, prosperous, and acceptable to God. A cheerful obedience to the laws, and an uniform compliance with the terms of our religion, will be the most convincing testimony of our wisdom, our patriotism, and our piety. For the support of those Laws, and of that Religion, for the maintenance of those momentous rights, which have been continually recognized and sanctioned both by the laws of God and Man, and in the resistance of wanton and violent acts of aggression, we are now engaged in a just and necessary contest. The issue must be in the hands of God. It remains however with ourselves,

ourselves, to persevere stedfastly in the path of duty,
 “ * TO OFFER THE SACRIFICE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS,
 “ AND TO PUT OUR TRUST IN THE LORD:” humbly
 hoping, through the Divine mercies, for the sake of
 every object which is valuable in civilized life, and for
 the true interests and happiness of our enemies them-
 selves, that they may not be suffered long to continue
 under the influence of principles destructive of all go-
 vernment, morality, and religion, but that they may
 soon return to a sense of order and piety; that they
 may “ † SANCTIFY THE NAME OF THE LORD,
 “ THAT THEY WHO HAVE ERRED IN SPIRIT MAY
 “ COME TO UNDERSTANDING, AND THE MALE-
 “ VOLENT MAY ATTEND TO INSTRUCTION.”

* Psalm IV. 5.

† Vide Isaiah XXIX. 23, 24, compared with Bishop Lowth's
 translation.

F I N I S.

A
S E R M O N

Preached before the HONOURABLE
HOUSE of COMMONS,

AT THE
CHURCH OF ST. MARGARET, WESTMINSTER,

ON
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 1794,

BEING
THE DAY APPOINTED BY HIS MAJESTY'S ROYAL
PROCLAMATION,

TO BE OBSERVED AS
A DAY OF SOLEMN FASTING AND HUMILIATION.

BY
HENRY BATHURST, LL.D.

CANON OF CHRIST-CHURCH, OXFORD.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR, AND SOLD BY T. PAYNE, AT THE MEWS GATE;
AND ALSO BY JOSHUA COOKE, AT OXFORD.

ISAIAH, i. 18, 19, 20.

COME NOW, AND LET US REASON TOGETHER, SAITH THE LORD: THOUGH YOUR SINS BE AS SCARLET, THEY SHALL BE AS WHITE AS SNOW; THOUGH THEY BE RED LIKE CRIMSON, THEY SHALL BE AS WOOL.

IF YE BE WILLING AND OBEDIENT, YE SHALL EAT THE GOOD OF THE LAND.

BUT IF YE REFUSE AND REBEL, YE SHALL BE DEVoured WITH THE SWORD: FOR THE MOUTH OF THE LORD HATH SPOKEN IT.

UPON so solemn an occasion as the present, it is the duty of every serious minister of the Gospel to awaken the unthinking and careless part of mankind to a due sense of their real situation; to present to their view, without weakness or aggravation, a faithful mirror of themselves; to recall their thoughts from the consideration of causes that are varying and

secondary, to some reflection upon such as are permanent and primary; to lead them, from an exclusive reliance upon the courage and fidelity of their fleets and armies, to a firm dependence upon an over-ruling Providence; above all, to point out to them the inseparable connection between the real prosperity of a kingdom and the religious sentiments and conduct of those who dwell therein.

THE words which I have chosen for the subject of the following discourse are so clear, that they require no comment; and so affecting, that they can never be listened to with indifference. They are part of a prophecy, which is ushered in with an uncommon magnificence of idea and expression, for the purpose, probably, of more deeply impressing the mind. Heaven and earth are called upon to hear the denunciation of God's vengeance against the impiety of the Jews, and his gracious promises of mercy upon their penitence and amendment. They are informed by the Prophet, or rather, the Supreme Being is himself introduced to announce to them, that, notwithstanding their present

state of dereliction, though their country was ravaged and laid waste by insolent invaders, yet all the efforts of their enemies should in the end be frustrated, and that God would signally interpose in their favour, if, reformed by his just judgments, they would “(a) CEASE TO DO EVIL,” and return to him, with true faith and sincere repentance; without which “(b) THE FAST, AND THE DAY OF RESTRAINT” are in every age alike; hypocritical and contemptible mockeries, or, at best, a mere “form of godliness,” without energy, and without effect.

WHOEVER reads the Bible must acknowledge, that almost every page of the historical and prophetical parts of it announces this important truth, which it is the principal object of my present address to illustrate and enforce; namely, that national prosperity, rightly understood, is, by the special direction of Providence, the effect of a just sense of religion among those who

(a) Isaiah i. 16. (b) Isaiah i. 13. Bishop Lowth's Translation.

compose a nation. By national prosperity I mean, not a sudden influx of wealth; not a wide extension of empire; but that prosperity to which our blessed LORD alludes, in his Sermon on the Mount, when he says, that the “(d) MEEK SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH;” that is, by the peculiar providence of GOD, they shall be secured in the quiet possession of all those rights, which are truly valuable. With respect to the Jewish nation, we have the most undeniable proofs, that with them the public welfare was, by divine appointment, uniformly annexed to the religious obedience of individuals; and that distress and misery in the State were the invariable consequences of irreligion and apostacy in the People.

BUT it may be said, that we have no right to infer, from the methods employed by Divine Wisdom in the establishment and administration of the Jewish theocracy, that the same methods will be applied by the Governor of the Universe to merely human institutions.—If we did not live in an age when men in

(d) Matthew v. 5.

general, from not being sufficiently grounded in the great truths of Revelation, are apt to be hurried away by every superficial argument, it would not be necessary to take any notice of so groundless an objection.

THAT the Jewish system was, in some respects, of a very peculiar nature, is universally allowed; but in the manner of governing his people, the Supreme Being most certainly treated them as moral agents; he “(e) DREW THEM WITH THE CORDS OF A MAN;” and no good reason can possibly be given, why, in the common course of Divine Providence, the same mode of guidance which the Ruler of the world vouchsafed to his favoured people, should not be extended (in a great degree at least) to every other civil government. On the contrary, very good reasons may be assigned why it should be so extended. 1st, This may be inferred from the deductions of unassisted reason on the nature of the Supreme Being, considered under the character of a moral Governor.—2dly, The same inference may be drawn from the express declarations of Scripture.

(e) Hosea xi. 4.

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THE belief of the existence of a moral Governor, just and equal in the distribution of rewards and punishments, is so closely connected with the belief, and even with the conception, of the being and attributes of God, that upon the principles of human reason only, where one has been admitted, the other has almost universally followed: it is indeed very difficult to separate these ideas. At the same time it must be allowed, that the apparent irregularities in the moral world are too obvious for any man of reflection not to perceive, that the design of a moral government (as far at least as individuals are concerned in it) is not perfected in the present state of existence.

INDIVIDUALS, therefore, whatever be their condition, may rest assured, that the scene is not finally closed here, but that they may look forward, with a just and reasonable confidence, to a future state, in which all these irregularities will disappear.

WITH respect to Communities, the case is very different.

As such, they will not exist hereafter ; and therefore it is highly reasonable to conclude, that as such they will invariably receive their portion of reward or punishment here.—So far mere human reason may venture to go—and has gone.—For, to exempt the Deity entirely from all attention to the concerns of this world ; to suppose him totally regardless of the disposition and conduct either of nations or of individuals, was never the language of right reason and true philosophy, even in the heathen world ; but the wild assertion only of a few licentious theorists ; who, considering indolence and sensual gratifications as the primary objects of desire, conferred upon their deity, what was, in their opinion, the completion of happiness, a listless and voluptuous immortality.—The more sober sages of antiquity rejected with disdain such degrading ideas of a moral Governor, and asserted, with great force of argument, the presiding care of Providence over human affairs ; and maintained strenuously that mankind, considered either collectively or individually, could by no means be permitted to remain for ever, either impious without punishment, or pious without reward.

NOR were these opinions confined to philosophers alone; they were the general and prevailing sentiments among the most virtuous people of antiquity.—During the happiest ages of the Roman Commonwealth, a strong disposition to piety, and a deep sense of a superintending Providence, under every circumstance, whether of prosperity or of adversity, were the leading features in the character of the nation. A number of very striking eulogies are bestowed by their great (*f*) orator upon his countrymen, for this pious turn of mind, by which they were so honourably distinguished; and their best historian perpetually reminds us of the connection which has been so much insisted upon, between the religious sentiments and conduct of individuals, and the welfare of the publick (*g*). His observations to this effect are so uniformly confirmed by the whole tenor of the Roman History, that a great

(*f*) See particularly his oration *De Haruspicum Responsis in Senatu*.

(*g*) “Intuemini horum deinceps annorum vel secundas res, vel adversas, invenietis omnia prospera evenisse sequentibus deos, adversa spernentibus.”

T. Livii, lib. 5. c. 51.

modern (i) Politician, though not much disposed to adopt, in its full extent, the true doctrine of Providence, is obliged reluctantly to confess, that he is very much at a loss how to account for the remarkable success and failure of the Romans, at different periods of time, upon any other principle.

If such then were the beneficial effects of religious sentiments and conduct on the affairs of an Heathen Nation, has there now taken place so great a change in the constitution of things, that no public blessings may be presumed to follow from the well-directed piety of a Christian people, nor any public disaster be apprehended from their impiety? No; there is a natural tendency which just notions of Religion cannot but have to promote the welfare of every government, by making the members of it peaceful, honest, diligent, and therefore successful in their respective callings; there is a respect with which such

(i) Discorsi di Niccolo Machiavelli, sopra la prima Deca di Tito Livio, libro primo, cap. 11.

conduct must inspire other nations, and real prosperity will be derived from this respect.—The reverse too of all this is equally obvious, as might easily be shewn; upon the principles of human reason only.

BUT to turn our thoughts from Reason to Revelation—from Man to God.—The new Testament, in the most explicit manner, asserts a natural and moral œconomy of the world, conducted by a Being of infinite power, infinite wisdom, and infinite justice; surveying the immense whole, and at the same time extending his paternal care to the most minute parts.—Moral agents are informed, that whether high or low; rich or poor, they are equally within the reach of his all-seeing eye;—that so far from being left to struggle through the present scene of things, unheeded or undistinguished, “ (l) THE VERY HAIRS OF their HEAD ARE
“ ALL NUMBERED”—and that their gracious Creator, though not always perhaps here, yet most certainly hereafter, “ (m) WILL REWARD EVERY MAN ACCORD-

(l) Luke, xii. 7.

(m) Matthew, xvi. 27.

“ING TO HIS WORKS.”—With respect to communities, as has been before observed, the case is far different : as such, they will not exist hereafter ; and we might therefore fairly conclude, were Scripture silent upon the subject, that, as such, they will constantly receive, in this world, their just punishment or reward. But upon so very important a topic we are not left to the deductions of fallible reason ; we have the more sure word of Scripture. In the sacred writings, it is declared, in the most unequivocal language, that there is a more than ordinary interposition of Providence in the revolutions of states. God is repeatedly stiled the Supreme Judge of Princes and Disposer of Kingdoms ; which are said not to flourish by mere worldly power or policy, but by his peculiar designation. He, we are told, looks down with favour upon the humiliation and piety of a nation ; and, by a special determination of his Providence, sends national calamities, as the chastisement of national pride and irreligion. The following awful passage from the prophet Jeremiah may therefore be considered as a warning

voice, addressed to the whole world: (*n*) “GO YE NOW
 “UNTO MY PLACE WHICH WAS IN SHILOH, AND
 “SEE WHAT I DID TO IT, FOR THE WICKEDNESS
 “OF MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.”

IT may now be proper to apply what has been said
 to the immediate purpose of this day's solemnity.

IF, in consequence of those rules of eternal justice,
 which, both from Reason and Scripture, we believe the
 Supreme Being to have laid down for the measure of his
 proceedings, as Moral Governor of the world, it should
 appear, that the real prosperity of a kingdom depends
 ultimately upon the religious sentiments and conduct
 of those who dwell therein, and that national cala-
 mities, sooner or later, will overtake an irreligious
 people; the following very interesting question remains
 to be asked: Have we of this country a fair claim
 (humanly speaking) to look up with confidence to
 Heaven for a continuance of that favour and protec-

(*n*) Jeremiah, vii. 12.

tion, with which we long have been, and still are, most signally blessed?—There never, perhaps, was a time, in which it more became us to attend to this very important question with honest and serious consideration; engaged, as we are, not in a war of ambition, of avarice, or of revenge, but in a just and necessary contest for every thing which makes life valuable; a contest with the common disturbers of the peace of Europe; with men, whose mad aim it seems to be to introduce every where, and by any means, the same wretched degree of disorder, confusion, and misery, which they have brought upon themselves. In such a contest, we are surely urged by every motive which can influence the heart, to make use of all human precautions, and to exert ourselves to the utmost; for the security of those unparalleled blessings which Providence has graciously conferred upon this happy island. Prudence, perseverance, activity, and courage, are virtues, which, in the conduct of worldly affairs, when properly directed, have the sanction of revelation, not less than of reason, to recommend and enforce the practice of them.—But let us not for ever look only to
 incidental

Incidental and immediate causes, as the exclusive sources of national miscarriages, or of national success. Such causes may indeed afford an easy solution of all difficulties, to infidelity, indolence, or self-conceit; but men of reflection, and, still more, well-informed Christians, will look beyond these causes; and, on such a day as this, it is more peculiarly our duty to do so.—Let us therefore impartially examine our hearts, and inquire whether the state of religion among us be such as to warrant a well-grounded expectation, that (o) “GOD. “WILL GO FORTH WITH OUR ARMIES.”—This inquiry, I much fear, will not turn out altogether in our favour. Complaints of the present times, especially when made by those who live at a distance from the world, are very frequently occasioned by mistaken or partial views of human life; by an over-weening conceit of their own sagacity; by temporary disappointment, or habitual discontent. But, without being under any such influence, every man who reflects seriously upon his own character, or observes attentively the characters of those around him, must acknowledge that there is in

(o) Psalm, xlv. 10.

this country a visible decay of that piety which is so earnestly pressed upon us in Scripture, as the life and soul of Christianity.—To account for our neglect of so sacred a duty, it is not enough to say what has been so often said already, that ambition, avarice, and pleasure, abetted by the loose maxims of the world, are causes fully adequate to the effect. This will not entirely clear up the point. We must, I think, go a little further.—During the most unfortunate and disgraceful period of our history, a false semblance of piety, consisting of extravagant flights of devotion, of inward raptures, and bodily agitations, had well nigh banished from the kingdom every appearance of pure and undefiled religion. Upon the return of a better form of government, and of the free and public profession of a more genuine faith, that hypocritical sanctity which had so long usurped the respectable name of piety, brought devotion itself into disrepute; and the far greater part of the nation, alarmed at the consequences of that fanaticism under which they had experienced so many evils, ran violently into the opposite extreme of lukewarmness and indifference.—This very dangerous ex-

treme

treme has ever since been more and more prevalent ; and we are now become so exceedingly apprehensive of appearing to fall into an enthusiastic strain of devotion, that we are in danger of losing entirely that true piety, which for many years after the reformation was the distinguishing characteristic of this kingdom.—It is no part of my design to make a vague and melancholy declaration against the wickedness of the age we live in ; such an office is seldom useful, and can never be agreeable.—On the other hand, these are not times, nor is this an occasion, or a place, in which it can be allowable in any degree to dissemble the truth.—The spirit of piety is departing from us, and in its room a spirit of false philosophy, a disbelief or distrust of Providence, and an ill-placed confidence in our own reason, and in “ THE ARM OF FLESH,” are the leading features in the disposition and character of by far too many in every situation of life. This most certainly is not the character and disposition of mind wherewith to come before the Lord to appease his anger, or to avert his judgments, much less to bring down upon our fleets and armies that blessing and aid, of which we

must always stand in need.—But, thanks be to God, we are still permitted, notwithstanding our manifold offences, to entertain encouraging hopes of national prosperity and success ; because the means of securing to ourselves an interest in the divine mercies are yet within our reach, and these means are so obvious, that they can never be mistaken.

If the promises of God are conditional, the conditions are not hard ; and it is man's most important interest, as well as his greatest duty, by readily complying with those conditions, to avail himself of the advantages to be derived from them. The most gracious declarations, not only of pardon but of favour and protection, are, in the Gospel, made to all those who, with faith in the atonement made for sin by their Divine Master, are induced sincerely to repent, and to evince, by a total change in their will and affections, the sincerity of their repentance.—Instead, therefore, of listening to every visionary project of reformation in our civil and ecclesiastical establishment, let each of us endeavour seriously to reform himself, and others also, as far

as his influence reaches.—Such a reformation is really wanted, and ardently wished for by all who cordially value, and rightly understand, the happiness they enjoy under a form of government which is the envy or admiration of the reasonable part of mankind. Such a reformation will entitle us to hope for and expect that assistance and defence from the great Disposer of all things, “(q) WHICH WILL FIGHT FOR US
“ AGAINST OUR ENEMIES, BETTER THAN A
“ MIGHTY SHIELD.”

LET us then humbly implore the Supreme Being to inspire us with deep contrition, and a repentance productive of real amendment of life; let us also heartily endeavour ourselves to co-operate with his divine grace.

WHEN we have done this, we have done all that is required of us, and may submit to every event with cheerful resignation; for even under the most melancholy of those various changes to which human life

(q) Eccclus. xxix. 13.

at all times, but more particularly in a time like this, is unavoidably exposed, a sincere Christian may not only stand up with the stoical philosopher, serene and undismayed, but he may apply to himself the pious and animating sentiments of the prophet Habakkuk.

“(r) ALTHOUGH THE FIG-TREE SHALL NOT
 “ BLOSSOM, NEITHER SHALL FRUIT BE IN THE
 “ VINES, THE LABOUR OF THE OLIVE SHALL FAIL,
 “ AND THE FIELDS SHALL YIELD NO MEAT;
 “ THE FLOCKS SHALL BE CUT OFF FROM THE
 “ FOLD, AND THERE SHALL BE NO HERD IN THE
 “ STALLS: YET I WILL REJOICE IN THE LORD,
 “ I WILL JOY IN THE GOD OF MY SALVATION.”

(r) Habakk. iii. 17, 18.

THE END.

A
S E R M O N

Preached before the HONOURABLE

H O U S E of C O M M O N S,

A T

ST. MARGARET'S, WESTMINSTER,

O N

F R I D A Y, J A N U A R Y 30, 1795:

Being the Day appointed to be observed as the Day of the

MARTYRDOM of King CHARLES I.

BY THE REVEREND THOMAS HAY, A. M.

CHAPLAIN TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR J. WALTER, CHARING-CROSS.

M. DCC. XCV.

И О М Е Р

Полное собрание сочинений

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HEBREWS, XIII. 9.

BE NOT CARRIED ABOUT WITH DIVERSE AND
STRANGE DOCTRINES.

THE extensive and benevolent design uniformly pursued by God in the Christian revelation, is the promotion of man's happiness, upon an enlarged view of his true interests: the duties which are ordained result from an uniform regard to the nature of man, and to his actual situation in life, from a consideration of that diversity of talents and faculties, of tempers and dispositions, with which men are endued; from a consideration of their external circumstances, the relation which individuals bear to each other and to society, the relation which they bear to their Maker; and from a contemplation of man as a compound being, con-

sisting both of soul and body, and as looking forward to a future life, the bliss or misery of which is to depend upon his own conduct during the state of his trial and probation here on earth.

Thus the Gospel dispensation is founded not upon an imaginary, but upon a real state of things; upon such a perfect acquaintance with human nature and human wants, as must of necessity belong to our omniscient and almighty Creator, who, “ * DISCERNETH THE
“ THOUGHTS AND INTENTS OF MAN’S HEART,”
“ † WHO KNOWETH WHEREOF WE ARE MADE,”
“ ‡ WHO IS MIGHTY IN WISDOM, WONDERFUL IN
“ COUNSEL.”

THE affectionate concern of God to mankind, as displayed in the Gospel (considered simply as a rule of life) is not confined to an account of those virtues which are to be practised, and of those vices which

* Heb. iv. 12.

† Psalm ciii. 14.

‡ Job xxxvi. 5. Isaiah xxviii. 29.

are to be avoided, to a declaration of those awful sanctions which attend the observance or the neglect of the divine law, and to a recital of all those motives which may encourage us in the pursuit of our real good, and may deter us from the perpetration of all that is evil in itself, and in its effects most calamitous to man ; but it extends itself still farther, to the suggesting much prudent and salutary caution, to guard men against many obstacles to their happiness, or to their success in the pursuit of it : with this view, sundry precepts are dispersed throughout the Gospel, warning men against a variety of temptations which may seduce them from the belief or the practice of Christianity ; with this view the Apostle, in my text, warns those whom he addresses against an error which would endanger both their faith and virtue, by enjoining them “ NOT TO BE
“ CARRIED ABOUT WITH DIVERSE AND STRANGE
“ DOCTRINES.”

By what rule then are men to direct their conduct ?
On what grounds are they to establish their faith ? On
the

the revelation of that God who is manifest “* FROM
 “ THE CREATION OF THE WORLD BEING UNDER-
 “ STOOD BY THE THINGS THAT ARE MADE;” “† ON
 “ THE FOUNDATION OF THE APOSTLES AND PRO-
 “ PHETS, JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF BEING THE CHIEF
 “ CORNER STONE;” on the truths of the Gospel, as pro-
 mulgated by Christ, and explained by his Apostles;
 truths confirmed not only by their own intrinsic excel-
 lence, but also by the concurrence of every external tes-
 timony. Having embraced the Gospel, Christians are
 frequently enjoined no longer to listen to any contrary
 suggestions of their own hopes, of their own fears, their
 own passions or their own imaginations, any more than
 to the delusions of other men, but to “‡ HOLD FAST
 “ THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS,” as the declared will
 of God, and “ NEITHER TO ADD THERETO NOR DI-
 “ MINISH FROM IT.”

THE wisdom of the apostolic injunction is abun-
 dantly evinced by the dangers justly to be apprehended

* Rom. i. 20. † Ephes. ii. 20. ‡ 2 Tim. i. 13.

from “ DIVERSE AND STRANGE DOCTRINES,” left, from their specious and imposing aspect, their novelty, their tendency to flatter and seduce the reason, or to gratify the evil propensities of men, they should, with all their falsehood, be eagerly received: such, besides, is the close connexion between opinions and practice, that false principles once entertained necessarily lead to erroneous conduct; false notions of God and his will create unfit notions of the nature of that duty which is owing both to him and to our fellow-creatures. If we once depart from the soundness and simplicity of the Gospel, we are liable to errors complicated and infinite, each tending to the corruption, and finally to the destruction, of all true religion.

THE caution of St. Paul is clearly directed against fluctuation in religious principle, against a departure from the faith of “ * JESUS CHRIST, THE SAME “ YESTERDAY, TO-DAY, AND FOR EVER ;” but the duty of the present occasion induces me to consider

* Heb. xiii. 8,

this caution as extending to civil as well as religious opinions, as warning us not to swerve from our obedience to the laws either of God or man (indeed our submission to the latter is founded in the express commands of the Gospel, and therefore is strictly a part of our Christian obedience) not to be carried about
 “ WITH DIVERSE AND STRANGE DOCTRINES.”

THE sad cause of this solemnity recalls to our minds, not only the lamentable consequences arising from “ DIVERSE AND STRANGE DOCTRINES,” as exemplified in the heavy guilt of this day, and in all the disastrous circumstances attending the corruption of our religion, and the subversion of the established government, but also suggests the danger of false doctrines, resulting from the variety of delusive artifices employed for their practical application, and ultimate success.

THE accomplishment of all the mischief which was at length achieved, and the consequent change which

was wrought in the nation, from the height of unexampled prosperity, to a state of the most aggravated calamity and wretchedness, was not a work of trifling difficulty; it was effected by much wicked industry and profound deceit; the leading authors of the mischief were few, but indefatigable; their real design was concealed even from their friends; false pretences from time to time were assumed; they applied themselves to the hopes of some men, in presenting objects of ambition, to the fears of others, by holding forth the necessity they would have for their protection, to the vanity, the malice, or animosity of others, by promises of distinction, or an application to their personal resentment; they imposed on the understandings of the weak and ignorant, they inflamed the public mind, by inventing shameless calumnies against many of those in high situations, by transferring their calumnies from men to things, from those who administered the government to the frame of government itself, from the clergy to the established religion; by exalting the purity of their own views, and

upbraiding every one who differed from them with the most iniquitous designs. By such arts did these men pervert the understandings of many, and stifle every generous sentiment of humanity or justice; by such arts did they so possess themselves of the prevailing passions of men, as to induce even some of large property and extensive influence to enter into desperate projects of innovation, which in their success would necessarily endanger the security of that property, of every object dear to them, as well as the lives and liberties of their fellow subjects. Hence were the leaders of those times enabled to subvert the established religion; hence were they enabled, after real grievances had been redressed, to deprive their legitimate Sovereign of his just power; hence did they enter into that dreadful struggle with their injured Monarch, and afterwards into vehement contentions amongst themselves. The most important securities for their civil liberty had been obtained; but they were deaf to the dictates of wisdom and justice. Though ample protection was afforded them on the part of
the.

the government, they neglected the claims of loyalty, and the reciprocal duty of obedience; they disregarded that fundamental and eternal law of justice, to render unto all their due; they disregarded this law, not only as confirmed by revelation, but as especially applied to this very duty of obedience, to render “ * TRIBUTE TO WHOM TRIBUTE IS DUE, “ CUSTOM TO WHOM CUSTOM, FEAR TO WHOM “ FEAR, HONOUR TO WHOM HONOUR;” “ † TO “ RENDER UNTO CÆSAR, THE THINGS WHICH ARE “ CÆSAR’S; AND UNTO GOD, THE THINGS WHICH “ ARE GOD’S.” Had they attended to these important principles, they would not have sacrificed the good order, the security, and the religion of a whole nation to their own selfish gratifications, to their vanity and inordinate lust of power: to use the words of a great body of men who were originally led to co-operate with them, “ (a) *Wicked and ambitious persons*

* Rom. xiii. 7.

† Matt. xxii. 21.

(a) Vide Address of Anabaptists to Charles II. then at Bruges. Clarend. vol. iii. page 491.

“ would not secretly have managed their hellish designs
 “ under the plausible and gilded pretences of liberty
 “ and reformation :”—“(b) They would not have put
 “ a yoke, an heavy yoke of iron upon the necks of their
 “ own countrymen ; they would not have thrown down
 “ the walls and bulwarks of the people’s safety.”

AND here it is material to observe, of what high moment it is, in every circumstance of human conduct (and more especially where great and serious questions are involved) that just motives and principles of action should be firmly rooted in the mind ; and this not merely because no action can be denominated good, unless the end proposed be laudable, the means be warrantable, and the motives from which it originates be pure and just, but also for the sake of constancy and perseverance in virtue. In the instance before us, if the motive to obedience be only the awe of the magistrate, or the fear of the laws, any one who, by means of violence or subtlety, esteems himself

(b) Clarend. vol. iii. p. 492. fol. ed. 1704.

able to overpower or elude the vigilance of the one, or the wholesome provisions of the other, will feel under no farther restraint or obligation to obedience; whereas, if men act under a sense of the commanding obligations of justice, under a sense of the authority of God's law, and the controul of religious principle, their obedience will be cordial and unshaken: they will not labour to discover how far they may safely proceed in the execution of nefarious designs; they will “* ABSTAIN FROM ALL APPEARANCE OF EVIL,” much more will they abominate its existence in themselves; their principles, their professions, and actions, will be uniform and consistent: “† WALKING UPRIGHTLY THEY WILL “WALK SURELY;” and from an honest and good heart, will guide their conduct by the dictates of truth, of sincerity, “AND A PURE CONSCIENCE.”

UNHAPPILY for the present times, no age has been more marked by “DIVERSE AND STRANGE DOC-

* 1 Thess. v. 22.

† Prov. x. 9.

“TRINES,”

“*TRINES*,” by the diffusion of the most delusive and dangerous maxims, than that in which we live ; maxims which are founded, either upon true principles misapplied, or upon the most palpable falsehoods, upon the most strange conceptions, and the grossest misrepresentations of man, as to his nature, and the circumstances in which he is placed in the world : they proceed on the supposition that man is a perfect and upright, and not, as in truth he is, a frail and fallen being ; that he is endued with reason fully capable of itself, in all cases, and under all circumstances, to discover and pursue the path of duty. With regard to man’s relative situation towards his fellow creatures, certain claims have been advanced, inconsistent not only with this or that description of government, but with every form of government, and with the very existence of society. These theories, which dissolve every obligation between man and man, are connected with others, which regard the obligations from man to his Maker, and which strike at the root of all religion, both natural and revealed.

WELL

WELL were it for the happiness of individuals, and for the public peace, if they would learn that lesson, so mortifying to all the arrogant pretensions of human nature, so degrading to the boasted dignity of reason, so adverse to the corrupt dominion of evil passions, but which is so necessary to the regulation of our minds and the direction of our conduct; if they would learn that important lesson of humility, so strongly inculcated in the Gospel; if they would cultivate that “POVERTY OF SPIRIT” most becoming creatures weak and imperfect as ourselves, if they would not “* THINK OF THEMSELVES MORE HIGHLY THAN THEY OUGHT TO THINK;” then would they more readily admit, and steadfastly act upon, the great moral duties and doctrines of Christianity, “† CASTING DOWN IMAGINATIONS, AND EVERY HIGH THING WHICH EXALTETH ITSELF AGAINST THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.”

BUT what is the object of all these lofty claims? Whence these efforts to unsettle all those principles

* Rom. xii. 3.

† 2 Cor. x. 5.

which have justly received the respect and veneration of mankind? For what purpose are they made, but for the purpose of exciting dissatisfaction, anarchy, and confusion, by imposing upon the credulity of the weak, and falling in with the corruptions of the vicious? Hence arguments are framed, calculated to infuse discontent into the various descriptions of men to whom they are addressed; and unceasing pains have been employed to vitiate the principles, to corrupt the affections, of the subordinate ranks of men, and to tempt them finally to betray their own happiness; to seduce them to attempts against that frame of government, not more distinguished for its general excellence, than for being that, under which these ranks of society enjoy great and valuable blessings, blessings in vain to be sought for under any other state of things, arising as they do, from the equal administration of justice, and from the moderation of our laws, by which “ (c) *all of us have it in our choice to do every thing that a good man would desire to do, and are restrained from nothing but what would*

(c) Blackstone's Commentaries, vol. i. book i. ch. i.

“ *be pernicious, either to ourselves or to our fellow citizens;*” arising also from the employment and incitements held forth to industry, by the multiplied manufactures, the extensive commerce, which it protects and encourages, by the liberal diffusion of wealth in its various channels, and by the security of the fruits of industry; from the settled maintenance provided for the poor; from the various charitable institutions for the support of age, for the instruction of childhood, for the relief of sickness, for the alleviation of distress, under all the various forms to which our nature is subject; and most eminently from the opportunities afforded for religious instruction (without which prosperity must lose much of its true relish, and adversity its only solid consolation); and from the unmolested enjoyment of the several modes of religious worship.

STILL discontent is to be raised; and, indeed, to point out inconveniences in any state of life, at any time, and under the most prosperous circumstances, is not

a talk of much difficulty. It is the dictate of experience, that no man, in any situation of life, is destitute of comforts and blessings; and few men, in any situation, are free from greater or less inconveniences and causes of anxiety: if any description of men expect to meet with absolute and complete happiness, they expect what is not to be experienced: for wise reasons God has ordained that human life should be a mixed condition of happiness and trouble, that thus, by a state of trial and imperfect enjoyment, the mind may gradually be prepared and purified for the unallayed and endless bliss of a future life. The wise and benevolent Author of Nature has graciously provided that happiness, far from being confined to any particular situation or rank, should consist in circumstances which belong indiscriminately to all orders of men; that it should consist in performing the duties of our station, whatever that station may be, with diligence and integrity; in the controul of turbulent passions; in the exercise of benevolent affections; in such a competency as is proportioned to our habits and situation of

6

life;

life ; in a sufficient enjoyment of health ; in the virtue of those with whom we are connected by blood, by friendship, or by the daily intercourse of life ; in our own sincerity and rectitude ; in the protection of just laws ; and in the profession and practice of our religion. These are the principal sources of human happiness : the attainment of these (as far as human efforts are concerned) is equally within the reach and compass of every man. We perceive that it by no means depends on our filling one station or another, but it very materially depends upon the conduct of our minds, the regulation of our passions, and the practice of virtue and religion ; on attending to the proper employment of our station, without invading the province of others ; “ * ON STUDY-
 “ ING TO BE QUIET, AND TO DO OUR OWN BUSI-
 “ NESS.”

THE delusive doctrines of the present times, instead of promoting man's happiness, are in themselves calculated to effect the utter subversion of it. Where

* 1 Thess. iv. 11.

they have been generally received, they have in fact been accompanied by scenes unparalleled either in guilt or wretchedness. Wherever principles of so malignant a dye are prevalent, it is vain presumption not to expect the same woful fruits which they have produced in every other country: with reference to our own, it is true, that in contemplating the national character, there is much to contemplate with satisfaction and gratitude. We admire the principles of generosity, of good sense, and seriousness, exerted under the powerful and extensive influence of genuine Christianity. The happy influence of Christianity we daily and hourly experience, perhaps insensibly, in the dispositions and habits which prevail amongst us. Let me not be misunderstood; it is not meant to speak presumptuously of our religious attainments; it is not intended to be asserted, that we are not in many points lamentably defective in instances of moral and religious duty: would to God there were on this point no just cause of shame and contrition! but still it will not be denied, that the influence of Christianity, though
doubtless

doubtless imperfect, is yet largely and extensively beneficial; that every man's observation will furnish him with illustrious instances of public and private virtue, founded on a sincere religious principle; and that the operation of this principle is widely diffused, and has universally some efficacy, though varying in degree, in forming the temper, disposition, and manners of all ranks of men. In the national character, therefore, there is much which we cannot but behold with satisfaction: But what is the result of this? Not that these good principles cannot possibly be vitiated, or, if vitiated, that they will be productive of less evil than is the natural consequence of such corruption: every good disposition, and every good principle now existing in the country, is an additional incitement, and an additional obligation, in point of duty, to preserve it entire and untainted from the contamination of false and dangerous opinions. The value of the treasure to be protected is a strong claim upon our active and indefatigable vigilance, that it be not wrested by violence, or withdrawn from us by subtlety. Confident presumption

is

is always dangerous: if the efforts and machinations of the enemy be active and unremitting, the means of defence should be adopted with equal alacrity and perseverance. The nation has been apprized of its danger, and guarded against the artifices employed for the destruction of its happiness: on its goodness of disposition and soundness of mind we depend (and, I trust, under the providence of God, we depend justly) for its resolute and continued resistance of all those insidious arts employed to pervert it, for its confirmed attachment to our happy constitution, and for its adherence to the true principles of our holy Religion: our security rests on the resistance of all those unfounded and mischievous maxims, which are so industriously diffused: but could we conceive it possible to happen, under any conjuncture of circumstances, that such a dreadful infatuation were to blind the understanding of the nation, and its affections were so depraved and debased, as to render the propagation of these delusions generally successful, it were vain to imagine that the sacrifice of our public principles

principles would not be attended with the utter loss of those virtues which have so long distinguished this nation: this observation has been warranted by the experience of other countries, and would be found strictly applicable to our own. Human nature is every where nearly the same: in every age and country mankind are endued with the same passions, the same evil propensities, the same selfishness of nature, the same perverseness of will, the same weakness, and the same pride of reason; the controul therefore of these depravities, and the regulation of these dispositions, have wisely been judged necessary, in all ages, to the good order, happiness, and safety of society; hence the origin of all law, hence the importance of the doctrines and sanctions of religion, regarded as a rule of human conduct. The characters and dispositions of particular nations may render them more or less inclined to respect legal or religious obligations, but when the authority of established laws is rejected, and the restraints of religion are renounced, the corruptions of human nature will remain uncontrouled, and break

forth in the perpetration of the most atrocious enormities. What would be the lamentable condition of a country without religion, has been, at different times foreseen and described by great and wise men; these descriptions, within our own observation, have been too wofully verified. When it is proposed that we should abandon every object which the wisdom and experience of ages have revered, it is incumbent upon us seriously and seasonably to consider what is likely to be adopted in their place. What do the new principles which are now held forth to the world present to us? They stimulate all the restless and malevolent passions of human nature; they excite men to acts of the most heinous guilt, in the acquisition of power, through all the rapid and sanguinary revolutions of faction, as well as in the maintenance and support of it; they multiply and aggravate all the temptations to the deepest criminality, and destroy all the correctives of them; they furnish fresh poison, and abolish the antidote; they render man a slave to his worst appetites; they make his reason subservient to the despotic sway of every guilty passion;

passion ; and thus, by leaving his inclination and power to commit evil without restraint, establish him the hardened and merciless enemy of the peace and happiness of his fellow creatures.

HAVING considered the burden of guilt and wretchedness, “ THE OVERFLOWINGS OF UNGODLINESS ” and misery, which, through the means of fatal delusion, overspread this country in the last century, and having suggested some considerations respecting those false and strange doctrines which have been more recently advanced, let us now turn our thoughts to those effects which the reflection on the past and present times ought to produce in ourselves.

THE period is highly interesting and important. When the divine “ JUDGMENTS ARE IN THE EARTH, “ MAY THE INHABITANTS OF THE WORLD LEARN “ RIGHTEOUSNESS ! ” The dispensations of the Almighty, though they may be mysterious, yet they must necessarily be founded in unerring justice. His

counsels may be to us unsearchable, “ * AND HIS
 “ WAYS PAST FINDING OUT ;” but it should be re-
 membered, that our understandings are very limited,
 his wisdom infinite : let us not therefore presume to sit
 in judgment over his counsels, but submit our narrow
 apprehensions to his will, and “ † HUMBLE OUR-
 “ SELVES UNDER HIS MIGHTY HAND.”

LET the fatal experience of those times (of which
 this day recalls the mournful remembrance) and the ob-
 servation of what is now passing in the world, “ WORK
 “ TOGETHER FOR OUR GOOD.” Both the one and the
 other are calculated, to impress on our minds the dan-
 gers arising from “ DIVERSE AND STRANGE DOC-
 TRINES,” to remove that indolence and fancied security
 which has too often rendered a state of prosperity fatal,
 to excite us to an upright and assiduous attention to the
 employments of our respective stations, to an increased
 veneration for our civil constitution, which extends its
 equal protection to all ranks of men, and, above all, to an

* Rom. xi. 33.

† 1 Pet. v. 6.

uniform and zealous obedience to the precepts of Christianity. Let us rest our virtue upon this as upon its only sure foundation; let us attentively look into our own hearts, let us honestly examine our lives, that we may reform what is amiss, that we may improve in the performance of every moral and christian obligation; let us encourage the observance of these duties by every means in our power, and, amongst others, by guarding men against the poison of false “* PHILOSOPHY AND VAIN DECEIT;” and instilling principles of piety, charity, and self-government, by early instruction and religious education. If we make this wise and manly use of our present situation, if we labour to advance in moral excellence, and to extend the influence of religious principle, we shall adopt the most probable means of averting the anger, and conciliating the favour, of that Almighty Being to whose mercies alone we look for a blessing on our exertions at this momentous conjuncture; to whose pro-

* Coloss. ii. 8.

teding care we owe so many signal deliverances of our church and nation. Such a conduct will be the most convincing proof of sound and true wisdom : and whether the critical circumstances of the present time be designed either for the punishment of our transgressions, for the trial of our faith, or the exercise of our virtue, we shall by such a conduct ensure to ourselves substantial advantages ; we shall convert evil into good, we shall justify the counsels of Providence by the use we make of its dispensations, by “ * BEING FRUITFUL IN EVERY GOOD WORK, AND INCREASING “ IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.”

* Coloss. i. 10.

F I N I S.

A
S E R M O N

Preached before the HONOURABLE
H O U S E of C O M M O N S,

AT THE
CHURCH OF ST. MARGARET, WESTMINSTER,

ON
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 1795:

BEING
THE DAY APPOINTED BY HIS MAJESTY'S ROYAL
PROCLAMATION,

TO BE OBSERVED AS
A DAY OF SOLEMN FASTING AND HUMILIATION.

BY THE REVEREND
SAMUEL GOODENOUGH, LL.D. F.R.S.
RECTOR OF BROUGHTON POGGES, OXFORDSHIRE.

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P S A L M xvii. 13.

DELIVER MY SOUL FROM THE WICKED, WHICH
IS THY SWORD.

WHEN David found himself in imminent peril from an ungodly, but powerful adversary, he naturally considered the calamity as proceeding from God, and prayed for his deliverance. We too see a very considerable part of the Christian world menaced by a people, who have professedly cast off all established worship of God, and who nevertheless triumph in their excesses. What else can we deem this, than a consequence of the same kind? Therefore, in this serious moment at least, the devout mind must naturally address itself to the contemplation of the ways of God's Providence, and fear. When, truly, did his judgments
appear

appear more manifest to the world? or when did the vanity of man more justly merit the severity of his wrath? Is it to be wondered, that the violence of iniquity should be let loose to awaken mankind, and to make them know of a truth, *that the Lord, he is the God?* 1 Kings, xviii. 39.

THE warnings of the present time are, doubtless, beyond all that we yet have received. We have lived to see (and that in the very centre of enlightened polished Europe) a subversion of all order, morality, and religion, still preserving unity in one point, to ravage and destroy; distracted counsels, regularly pointing the most nefarious designs; a change of men, directors of the fatal schemes, but yet the fatal schemes uniformly pursued; and repeated successes furthering these hideous endeavours to destroy. Occurrences these, so different from what have usually happened, must naturally prompt the mind to satisfy itself of the cause. The cause must be deduced from God. If ever the hand of God appeared conducting the affairs of men, it

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certainly

certainly must be allowed to have shewn itself in the events of the years which have lately past ; and however men may argue upon them, and fancy that they see a guidance to any one particular end, of this we may be sure, that they all must tend to the establishment of the reverence of his great name, and to teach men *every where to repent*. Acts, xvii. 30. If the ebullitions of impiety produce discord and ruin upon earth, *the righteous will see it, and fear*. Psalm xl. 3. If the wicked are sent forth as a sword to bring down the pride of man, in the humility of their abasement, proud men will be sorry for their sin, and turn to the God of all mercies with fasting and with prayer, beseeching him, for Christ's sake, to spare his heritage, and to *shield them, till the calamities be overpast*. Psalm lvii. 1.

THE end of all God's dealing with man is to enlighten and purify his soul, and, through the various means required to effectuate this design, to render him acceptable to himself. For this cause, no ordinary

nor extraordinary means have been spared. In the first establishment of his word among men, the Almighty thought fit to manifest his power by signs and wonders, such as unequivocally bespoke a God bearing rule over the concerns of men. By these means the truth became fully established : henceforth miraculous interposition ceased. Not that God's superintending power was withdrawn, but the exercise and the manifestation of it were less striking to our senses. In the days of his most visible interference, miracle did not accomplish all ; natural means had a part in the dire execution of his wrath. It was not at all times, that *fire came down from Heaven*, or that *the earth opened, and swallowed up* the daring unbelievers ; the pestilence also raged, till it had consumed them ; and the enemy came upon them, and destroyed them. These last are the more usual signs of God's manifestation to us : and, indeed, these are fully sufficient to the purpose of humbling the pride of man, and making him turn to God.

As God then so evidently displays his infinite wisdom in correcting the evil of this world by natural means

means also, who shall say, which of these means is the most proper for his purpose? Would we argue from the choice of David, we must conclude, that our sins are exposed to the severer wrath of God. It was not more religiously than wisely judged by him: *I am in a great strait, let us fall now into the hands of the Lord, (for his mercies are great) and let me not fall into the hand of man.* 2 Sam. xxiv. 24. So he and his people learned, from the ravages of the pestilence, how incompatible was pride of heart with reverence due to God.

THERE is no point, in which man more surely fails, than in endeavouring to search into the deep things of God; than when, substituting his own notions of the fitness of things for the necessity of them, he argues, that the world must be governed by certain courses; and that, in the general view of human affairs, vice must always be abased, and the righteous invariably triumph. We must recollect, that *we are strangers and pilgrims on earth.* Heb. xi. 13. *We seek a better*

(B)

country,

country, *that is, an heavenly.* Heb. xi. 16. In the intermediate time, the free agency of man, of the turbulent as well as the humble, is to have its course; our patience is to be tried, and our tendency to vice is to be checked. Whatsoever, therefore, comes upon us from above, we must accept, and with trembling turn to the amendment of our hearts.

IF our times have furnished us with that rare instance, of men casting off all fear and worship of the true God, and yet prospering for a time, through their very outrage, the more fearful token this (for it is contrary to the general tenor of the promises of God, as it is written, *Thou puttest away all the ungodly of the earth like dross.* Psalm cxix. 119.) that the hand of the Lord directs the whole. Thus Pharoah was raised up to oppress the Israelites with unheard-of tyranny; but they learned in their rescue how great was their deliverer. Thus they became a fit people *to whom should be committed the Oracles of God,* Romans, iii. 2. and they placed their faith in him. Their very sufferings

sufferings taught them the value of their blessings, and proved to them, and to the whole world, how fearful were the judgments of God. Thus also, *so was the will of God*, the haughty Nebuchadnezzar carried away captive all the house of Israel, and led them, by this fearful suffering, to return to God their deliverer. It was easy to be seen, that these were God's swords, to avenge his great name, and to turn the hearts of the disobedient to the reverence of his holy word.

PLAINLY, certainly, if not equally manifest, is the present working of his almighty power. He appears now to use the same natural means in sending forth a mighty host, deriding all religious principles, void of all love or fear of God, and denying Christ the Saviour, who once died for all, to effect his great purposes on earth; to be the scourge of man's vanity; and, by hurrying him through all the rounds of turbulence, disobedience, and impiety, to bring him back more surely to a sense of the value of godliness, and of the knowledge of his faith and fear.

THE success of wicked men is no argument that religion is a superfluous care, or that their cause is just. Were that the case, then Saul was righteous in persecuting *the man after God's own heart*. 1 Sam. xiii. 14. It must be remembered, *that Christ's kingdom is not of this world*. John, xviii. 36. The wicked of this world prevailed over the Lord of Life. To suppose that the sinfulness of man must never bear rule over more holy conduct, is to recal the times governed miraculously by the immediate hand of God; for, to expect *the weak things of the world* (for such are the faith, the humility, the gentleness, and forbearance, of a true worshipper of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ) at all times to *confound the strong*, i. e. the passions and violence of ungodly men, what is it, but summoning the guardianship of heaven to uphold them continually with a stretched out arm? In all cases, religion maintains its distinct value; *it may be troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed*. 2 Cor. iv. 8,

iv. 8, 9. How forcible are the words of the Prophet: *The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.* Isaiah, lvii. 1.

WEAK minds stumble at the reception of sayings like these; but, in good truth, the belief of a Providence befriending goodness, even while it permits a temporary or partial oppression of it, is an object of our faith. We are told, that thus and thus God deals with mankind; that the wicked are God's sword, to avenge the earth. We are to believe, and fear.

HENCE we carry on the argument to establish the point, that no one is to despair of God, if those who depart from him should, for a time, appear to triumph in their strength. We may rest assured, that not a hair of our head falls to the ground without his knowledge. While, therefore, his great judgments are in
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the world, we must refrain ourselves, and hold fast to God, but *not sorrow as men who have no hope.*
1 Thess. iv. 13.

GOD's favour is not to be estimated by any rules of worldly success: neither does his love exalt every merit of the just man, *for we walk by faith, not by sight,* 2 Cor. v. 7; nor (blessed be his mercy and long suffering) does his wrath at once consume every hardened sinner. When the Samaritans would not receive our Lord, the disciples exclaimed, *Wilt thou that we command fire from heaven, and consume them, as Elias did? But he rebuked them, saying, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.* Luke ix. 54, 55, 56. If cruelty to himself was not to be punished, on what ground is it to be expected, that in the inferior concerns of life, destruction should operate against the sinner with immediate energy, and cut him off? Why a righteous Stephen should be permitted to fall by the hands of violence, why a wicked

Cain should escape the retaliation due to his great crime, are matters which we are not to explore. But while we see these things, we learn not to set up worldly notions of success or failure, as the criterion of the wisdom and justice of God.

IF the wicked be God's swords, the very term implies, that sometimes, and for a season, they may be permitted to prevail. There is a great difference between God's allowing violence to run its course, and his ordering wickedness, for its own sake, to have the upper hand. In the former case, the great purposes which God meditates upon earth are often accomplished: man is converted and healed. In the latter, the whole moral government of God would be overthrown. But, truly, the very successes of the wicked are usually attended with ruin to themselves, effectually testifying that God is not on their side. The same unprincipled violence which leads them against others, acts against themselves. When *Sennacherib*, even after experiencing the præternatural exertions

tions of his power against him, disregarded the great God and Father of all, his own sons turned aside from all reverence of him, and slew him in the temple of his vain deity. Would we here turn to the circumstances of the present day? Ask whether success has so attended our enemies, as to induce one rational person to be persuaded, that God has blessed any of those who have rioted, in their violence and impiety. They have stricken down others, it is true, but they have stricken, more sorely stricken, one another; and of the succession of these devourers of each other, how can we better speak of them, than in that emphatic language of the prophet, *Where are they?* Zach. i. 5.

BUT to return. Man is not to repine, though he see ungodly men flourish. Arguing, that the prevailing hand of the unjust often bears with it the desolating sword of God, he must consider, that the wicked cannot, perhaps, become this scourge, till they have cast off God, and thus, by preparing their
 4 hearts

hearts for fury, imagine such deadly things: so that this very evil is, in every part of it, what God himself hath suffered to effect his purposes on earth. To this principle do we readily trace up all those fearful and strange wonders, which have taken place in a neighbouring kingdom. Would we characterize its present sad situation, can we do it more truly than by reciting God's denunciation of misery against the sins of Jerusalem? *Behold, the Lord of hosts doth take away from Jerusalem, and from Judah, the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water. The mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient. The captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator. And I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them: and the people shall be oppressed every one by another, and every one by his neighbour: the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable.* Isaiah iii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. What words can more pointedly

describe the desolation in that country? We see with astonishment and serious pity a mighty empire convulsed from its very centre, its sovereign murdered, its religion exiled, all civil order, all venerable establishments, borne down with impious fury. Would you talk of property? it is all confiscated; of the temples? they have been all most sacrilegiously pillaged; of the comforts of social life? they are all interrupted by the din of ferocious uproar. What can we say of the blessings of art and science, those heavenly endowments of the mind, the alleviators of worldly care, the grateful sources of human tranquillity? they are all sunk in terrors, poverty, and distraction: no more sense of holy joy at the return of the accustomed times and choice seasons of communing with God; they are all confounded in that strange numeration of days, which is so new and alarming to the whole church of Christ; contrived, doubtless, that the hallowed seventh day, enforced by all legislators, and observed by all good men (worshippers of the true God) from the creation of the world until

now, might be obliterated, lest haply there might remain any thing that is called God, or worship, in their land.

NONE but people, who had first divested themselves of every religious and moral obligation, could have been those swords, those scourges of the nations, so necessary to awaken all. Who, then, shall be dismayed, as though *God had forgotten to be gracious?* Psalm lxxvii. 9. God forbid that any one should: there is an impiety in the very thought. Scripture hath not left us without promise on this subject also. Thus plainly and emphatically doth *Solomon* admonish the faithful in the Lord: *Let not thine heart envy sinners; but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long; for surely there is an end, and thy expectation shall not be cut off.* Prov. xxiii. 17, 18.

THE intent of what has hitherto been said, has been to vindicate the ways of God, and to make men aware of the methods of God's dealing with

them, in order to establish a principle upon which we may proceed. What principle? The persuading of men to regard the power of the Most High God, and every where to repent. Who knoweth, if a man will repent, but that God, in the midst of his wrath, will think of mercy? But how may our repentance be effectual to gain his love? The foundation of true repentance consists in questioning the heart, whether it be right before God, and whether it believe rightly in his holy word. From infidelity arise every wicked word and work. The sacred bond, by which we are held to God, being loosened, the ties, by which man is bound to man, are instantly dissolved. Hence originate rapine, murder, and every species of flagitiousness. Things proceeded thus in that distracted nation, which illustrates and confirms these awful truths. A spirit of infidelity had long been suffered to pervade the mass of the people, and to get possession of their minds. In due progress, all religious notions of reverence of God, and of worshipping him, were laughed to scorn. In natural consequence, reli-
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gious practice was, in general, reduced to mere designing unprincipled artifice, as interest or ostentation, not as God, directed. What was it more than pagan morality? A morality, that under the most powerful human auspices, could not stand: and no wonder, when it proceeded from man's device, and not from faith in the power of Almighty God. And thus is it, that darkling infidelity leads man: having turned him away from the brightness of the Sun of Righteousness, it persuades him to venture forth amidst the deceitful appearance of things—under the reflected rays of the light of man's vain knowledge, and most surely leads him to destruction.

FAITH in the Most High God is the sole principle of happiness in this life, or in that which is to come. There never was an instance where that failed, but the comforts of life were rendered insecure. Alas! how few seek after God with an idea of hope, if *haply they may find him*. Acts, xvii. 27. How few bear in mind, that God the Father made the world, and all
that

that is therein; that God the Son redeemed us by his blood shed once upon the cross; that God the Holy Ghost sanctifieth the elect of God; and, that the ever blessed Godhead commandeth and exhorteth all men, every where, to follow righteousness in the faith and love of Christ! And yet this is the right faith, which must be kept whole and unbroken, as being the only bulwark against the horrid inroads of infidelity, and the violence of evil hearts. This is that fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom, for *it is the power of God unto salvation*. Romans, i. 6. A subject of this sublime and eternal importance ought neither to be disregarded, nor committed to the light treatment of flippant conversations; it should be our thought *at our downsitting, and at our uprising*, our study, our deep research; no knowledge is equal to it, none so fraught with good: the consequences of the neglect of it are alarming in the highest degree. We may call the whole world to witness the truth of what we say. See it now, in almost all its nations, deploring the mischiefs of *an evil heart of unbelief*

unbelief in one country (hence become the common scourge of all) *in departing from the living God*, Heb. iii. 12.

BUT to this end do God's judgments shake terribly the earth, that man may *go on from strength to strength*, from faith to humility before God.

BUT we may ask, have the perils of the present day as yet produced a due effect upon the minds of men, to excite them to the fear of God? Vanity, is it yet put away? Irreligion, is it yet checked? Reverence of God's holy ordinances, is it yet held in due solemnity? Yet these are the main objects to which the terrors of the Lord are directed; for, when *the love of man is waxed cold*, what else can bend his will to fulfil the pleasure of the Most High God?

THIS is not a time to trifle, to be blind to *the sins, which do so easily beset us*, Heb. xii. 1. or to make a
mock

mock at God. Let the vanity, the oppression, and the fraud, be put away, and let every heart be just in the faith and love of Christ. It is high time that *all* ranks of men should awake. And let those, to whom the goodness of God hath given the pre-eminence, shew themselves the first to testify their acknowledgments, that all good things descend from him; and let them testify it in the piety of their lives. Is it to be wished, that the body of any people should be led to adore the eternal truths of the grace of Christ? What more sure inducement can there be, than that the higher orders should take the lead in religious humility, in observing the Sabbath, in being instant in prayer, and in being given to good works? What faith our Lord? *Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required.* Luke, xii. 48.

MENTION has been made of the triumph of the wicked, severe in its effects, but *rewarding evil to themselves*. Isaiah, iii. 9. But let no one pride himself in the ideal depravity of others. *To his own master every*

every one standeth or falleth. Romans, xiv. 4. *Let us not be high minded, but fear.* Romans, xi. 20. If our enemies furiously rage together, be it our study, with all that humility which becomes suppliants at the throne of grace, to contrast their conduct with acts of piety and good report. Let us never be *partakers of other mens' sins.* 1 Tim. v. 22. If they, in the fullness of their hearts, *deny God, and say, who is the Lord?* Exod. v. 2. let us glory, *God is my king of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.* Psalm lxxiv. 12. *God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light, bind the sacrifice with cords, yea even unto the horns of the altar.* Psalm cxviii. 27. Is their language boastful, and do they say in their heart, *Our power, and the might of our hand, hath gotten us this wealth?* Deut. viii. 17. be it remembered by us, that thus saith the Lord, *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord.* Jer. ix. 23. If they have trans-

gressed the ordinances, and broken the everlasting covenant, let us testify, that, *Blessed is the man that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.* Isaiah, lvi. 2. Are they implacable, and ready to shed blood? let us follow the beautiful directions of the Apostle, *Owe no man any thing, but to love one another, for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying: thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.* Romans, xiii. 8, 9, 10. If they in their monstrous apostacy* deny Christ, and say with the Sadducees of old, *there is no resurrection,* Matth. xxii. 23. let us comfort one another, *that the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised,* 1 Cor. xv. 52;

* France used to pride herself, that her King was styled the elder son of the Church.

that we shall all appear before the judgment seat of our Lord and only Saviour Jesus Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done. 2 Cor. v. 10. Thus, contrasting our faith with their unbelief, our charity with their hatred, our mildness with their tyranny, our hope in Christ's kingdom to come with their blind disregard of all the revelations and promises of God, from the very beginning of the world, we act as becometh them who wait for the salvation of God. But, and if there are some few, nurtured among us, partaking of the same name, the same blood, the same interests, the same faith, who, too happy, did they but know it, under the blessings of our just government, are wishing for their sword and their violence, (now the detestation of the whole earth besides,) let us oppose to them also the same mildness of the Christian spirit, beseeching God, who is the Father of all mercies, to forgive them and turn their hearts; intreating him, in whose hands are the issues of life, that they may yet live, all the while beholding religion flourishing amongst us, and plen-

teousness in all our borders ; and, above all, witnessing the high power and blessings of the Lord God omnipotent, working out *the stability of our times*. Isaiah xxxiii. 6.

THE affairs of this world are ever weak and perilous, and subject to the terrors of violent men. How then shall we bear up against the tyrannous hate of those who seek our hurt, otherwise than, while we firmly use those means of defence, with which God hath amply blessed us, by being instant in prayer to the great Lord of all ? For what should we pray ? Let us pray, that God would look down upon us with an eye of mercy and compassion ; that he would defend us with his heavenly shield, and bless the exertions of this nation, in the defence of its laws, its liberties, and religion. Let us pray, that God would pour into our hearts the true knowledge of himself, and of the intent of the wonders which he doeth among the children of men. Let us pray, that through the grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ comforting

us, and by the power of the blessed Spirit dwelling in us, he would take away from us all hardness of heart, and contempt of his holy word ; that he would give us strength to avoid all those snares and temptations to sin, which do so abound amongst us ; and that he would call back our enemies also from their evil way, to the good of mankind, and to the glory of his most holy name. Yet again let us pray, that all we who are humbling ourselves before him this day, may do it in singleness of heart, in his faith and fear : particularly, that *we may be all kindly affectioned one towards another—honouring the King as supreme—obeying the ordinances, for they are good to all—each one content with that he hath, for it is great godliness—and bearing always in our minds, that the time will assuredly come, when the love of God, which passeth knowledge, will recompence the just ; when the greatness of Christ's kingdom, that only fure fountain of blessed and eternal hope (for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved, but that of Jesus Christ, Acts iv. 12.) shall be made*

fully

fully known to us, and prove, that no sufferings
nor advancements of this transitory life *are worthy*
to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed.
Romans, viii. 18.

F I N I S.

A

S E R M O N

Preached before the HONOURABLE

H O U S E of C O M M O N S,

AT THE

CHURCH OF ST. MARGARET, WESTMINSTER,

ON

W E D N E S D A Y, M A R C H 9, 1796,

B E I N G

THE DAY APPOINTED BY HIS MAJESTY'S ROYAL
PROCLAMATION,

TO BE OBSERVED AS

A DAY OF SOLEMN FASTING AND HUMILIATION.

B Y

R O B E R T H O L M E S, D. D.

CANON OF CHRIST-CHURCH.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR, AND SOLD BY T. PAYNE, AT THE MEWS GATE;

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L U K E, xiii. 8.

LORD, LET IT ALONE THIS YEAR ALSO.

SUCH was the language of affectionate application for the Unfruitful Tree. The Parable in which it is contained, seems to have been intended to bring men and nations under an examination and judgment of their own mind, by shewing them, as in a mirror, what they are. The train of thought, to which it directly leads, will indeed shock a presumptuous confidence, with which some hearts are perhaps elated. It will disturb a pleasing security, into which many are willingly lulled. But still, as the reflections, which the Parable will suggest, must make their way

way into every mind, before individuals and communities can be reclaimed from an habitual violation of duty ; we may perhaps owe it to the solemnity of this occasion, to the sanctity of this place, and especially to the penitent profession in which we have now united, to enter upon and pursue them.

BE it therefore allowed me, to propose the Parable, in some of its parts, for the subject of present consideration.

As it is evident that the human race, and the human character, are represented in the Parable under other names, it immediately becomes an interesting question, into what state many a man's mind will be thrown, when the view of his appropriated emblem has happily brought him to himself. Perhaps, with a spirit of penitence, so strong as to subdue the rising reluctance of self-partiality, and so sincere as to adopt the unreserved language of truth, he would assume some parts or other of the subsequent confession.

“ MANY

“ MANY indeed are the blessings, which arise now in remembrance, as witnesses against me. Though endowed in early life with means of manifold improvement, yet am I left, when man, thus bare of all useful attainment, and pitifully insufficient for the laudable energies of life. As to becoming effort, it is precluded by irremovable incapacity ; and as to time, it can find no application, but in some frivolous pursuit of the day. Life has been hitherto, and is likely to be still, passed wildly through, without principle, without use, without happiness. As to moral character, the case is worse than negative. The heart once possessed some native goodness ; and life gradually opened into situations and circumstances, that might have preserved and improved it. Yet now, what appears within, but the permitted usurpation of positive evil ? The broad day of my course has brought on an extinction of that worth, which shed at least some faint lustre on its dawn. Estranged by long and wilful antipathy from the influences of Religion, I am come at last to feel the want of its support and consolation, but languish under little hope of making them
mine.

mine. Wealth, Eminence, Authority, or at least the common relations and dependencies of society, invested me with many noble powers of beneficially affecting others and myself. Yet in all these respects, no thanks have been deserved, and no comforts have accrued. Above all, I dare not view, with an altered Father's eye, what my children have been suffered to become. Thus alas! have Blessings been lost upon me. Sufferings too have been occasionally interposed: ascribed indeed at their time, to the desultory hand of undistinguishing chance, but led on, as it now appears, by the Providential hand of appropriated mercy. Yet they too were baffled in their office; and left the heart not amended, but hardened."

WHOEVER, on considering themselves thus deeply, cannot truly disclaim any characters like these, must make their own application. That the evil might end with them, it were vain to wish. The depravity of individuals can be no solitary case; the Publick will be, what its several members are.

AND

AND if, as a Christian community, we were to take the same survey of our state, the result, instead of suggesting a confident security, would demand some similar language of repentant self-reproach. "To deliverances signal and numerous," (so might the confession run) the Christian Church among us has been indebted for preservation and support, and for all adequate means of gaining on every heart, and forming the publick mind to the proper character of a Christian nation. Yet if thou, O God, art come seeking fruit "*(a)* in the place of the vineyard, that thy right-hand hath planted," and from "the branch that thou madest so strong for thyself," how scanty and how poor will the fruit appear before thee! Is the Religious Principle, which ought to spread and gather strength under the influence of Religious blessings, either extended in prevalence, or reinforced in sway? Does it maintain a ruling direction in the several classes of society, by controuling the excesses of passion, and regulating the movements of life? No:

(a) Psalm, lxxx. 15.

it is overpowered by the restless agitations of business ; it is outraged by the guilty scenes of voluptuous life ; it is explained away by the casuistical delusion of an insidious Philosophy. Then, as at an entrance, which either negligence or design has left without a guard, Evil makes unresisted inroad into the heart ; and commences there the production of all its subservient principles. Thence they issue, to waste the moral beauty of God's rational creation, and to taint the precious sources of particular and general blessing. Had the Religious Principle gone forth in its strength, then indeed private virtue, like a vigorous and healthy tree, would have expanded itself over the whole community, accumulating its various produce in publick happiness. But now, the tree, though “ (b) planted “ in the house of the Lord,” yields not the fruit adequate to so favourable a situation.

SUCH is, in individuals and communities, that unprofitableness under great means of good, that barrenness as to Christian character, which the Parable implies,

(b) Psalm, xcii. 12.

and

and on which it proceeds. And if this be confessedly our own national case, the turn, which the Dresser of the Vineyard gave to his intercession, becomes of course the more material and interesting.

OF that aggravated worthlessness, which was imputed to the tree, he offered no palliation : and the justice of its immediate excision he seems to have admitted. And what Wisdom and Rectitude induced him to admit on the part of his object, Reason and Truth will require us to confess on our own.

FOR if individuals or a people have perverted to a course actually vicious, the very means which should have conducted them to virtue ; or even if they have done Nothing under the important trusts and blessings of God, and have so far defeated that sovereign interest of his, the advancement of human happiness by the improvement of human virtue ; what, it may be asked, is it in their power either to say or to do, to extenuate the guilt they have incurred, and to avert the punishment they deserve ?

THEY may prefer the plea of **REPENTANCE**.

BUT to an actual improvement of divine gifts, under states of manifold kind, and under relations of extensive reach, their obligation lay. And sorrow for having failed to discharge it, differs so greatly from having really fulfilled it, that the former cannot, upon any evidence which nature can discover or trust, be concluded a satisfactory substitute for the latter.

THEY may urge the promise of **FUTURE FRUITFULNESS**.

BUT even this seems to carry no certain and decisive weight in the case. For, be future fertility what it may, still the guilt of antecedent barrenness must remain what it was. After-conduct, answering at the best only for itself, changes not the nature and demerit of former behaviour. And besides, the promised fruitfulness, even supposing it sufficient to compensate for preceding barrenness, may either begin too late, and be immaturely broken off by death; or it may never
commence,

commence, as many or most of the times, the places, the occasions, the circumstances, in which the good part should have been acted, but was not, will have passed off, to return no more.

SUCH appears the insufficiency of human pleas and promises. So that the sentence in the Parable "cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground," might have been deservedly and justly fulfilled upon the tree, and, by parity of reason, upon every man, and every nation.

UNIVERSAL and extreme, then, was the need of an Intercessor; of One, who could offer to God, what man could not offer, reasons certain and real for vouchsafing indemnity to the guilty. To such an Intercessor, and to the ground of Intercession which it pleased him to take, the Parable seems almost immediately to conduct our view.

THE DRESSER of the Vineyard began indeed with the intreaty, "Lord, let it alone this year also."

AND

AND certainly upon concession as to time, all hope must rest its primary dependance. But to vouchsafe so much as this is mercy, and even more than mercy. To prolong the being of men and nations, is a continued exercise of that “(c) effectual working,” which made them what they are. In vain would the tree imbibe the juices of the ground, and the spirit of the dew : in vain would the body of man receive sustenance and rest ; if these outward means were not applied within to the purposes of life, by the hourly miracle of the Great Workmaster’s hand. With nations too the parallel will strictly hold. What are Wisdom, and Vigilance ; what are Wealth, Industry, and Fortitude, if God vouchsafe not to adopt them as his instruments, and to effectuate their effort for the support of that Publick, to which they are devoted ? How signal, then, is that divine kindness, which permits no past and livelong unprofitableness to determine our fate, but allows Time to remain our common possession ; and leaves us still, as Christian men and a

(c) Ephes. iv. 16.

Christian

Christian nation, to hold our stand, and places as anew at the opening of productive life?

So far the intercession of the Dresser of the Vineyard was simply INTREATY; and it carried a principal and direct relation to that object for which he interposed. But his intercession thenceforth took a new direction: for the words immediately subsequent, "till I shall dig about it," introduced a reference, and a very particular one indeed, to the Intercessor himself.

HIS special UNDERTAKING it then became, to stimulate the vegetative power by additional, and perhaps yet untried, applications of his own. And this is the point of most important consideration. For here it is that a reference from the Dresser of the Vineyard to another and far greater Intercessor, which seems kept up through the Parable, breaks forth with greatest strength and expression. Similar was that Undertaking, which was then in the hands of the Great Intercessor for the world. He was then interposing, and has since continued to interpose, new and

incomparable

incomparable applications of his own, to promote in his Christian Vineyard the due fruits of the Christian character. And upon view of these means which he applied, how wonderful and interesting a scene appears of Providential Benignity and Power? It comprises at once all that can abate the fears, and assure the hopes, of the human heart; all that can fix the thoughtless, or soften the obdurate: in a word, all that can act in the way of motive upon the moral feelings of mankind. Of an accumulation so vast it would be vain to attempt detail: no more can be done, than barely to name some few of the great means, which it hath pleased him to apply.

I. ONE of them lay in his deliverance of man from the punishment of past transgressions.

WICKEDNESS, even though it escape the present punishment of external evils, which happens but rarely, still inflicts on the heart a penal wound; and that too is inflamed by a dreadful forecast of an eternal ratification, which God will give to the very sentence
that

that Conscience passes now. Hence, as good men are raised from happy to happier states of mind by the advancing improvement of their virtue; so bad men are precipitated from deep to deeper misery by the growth and consummation of their wickedness. So are commencing now, in the way to final completion, the penal sufferings of the guilty.

SUCH, then, was the state of sinners: but it pleased the Great Intercessor, “(d) by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions” which had been committed, to deliver men “(e) from the wrath to come.” His Death, (f) as a condemnation of sin, and (g) a Sacrifice of Propitiation, presented to God a real inducement to grant indemnity to sinners. By his blood that better Covenant was set up, which placed them in the new light of redeemed and forgiven penitents; and declared that Repentance, if joined with

(d) Heb. ix. 15.

(e) 1 Thess. i. 10.

(f) See Rom. viii. 3.

(g) See Ephes. v. 2.

the production of fruits worthy of it, with the improvement of ten talents or of one, and either for the whole day or even an hour, should for Christ's sake be accepted, in behalf of all that would believe in him. "If it bear fruit," was the condition stated in the Gospel, as well as the Parable.

WHAT an impediment, then, to virtuous exertion, what an obstruction to the principle of moral life, was thus removed? O let not the soil be so stirred in vain: but let Human Nature act for itself with some of that affection, with which the Universal Saviour has acted for it!

II. THE Great Intercessor applied also his personal Instruction, and transcendent Example.

SPEAKING as never man spake, he poured the light of heavenly truth on those who, in a spiritual sense, were blind, and lay benighted in the gross darkness either of ignorance, or of error. And in his Written Word he still authoritatively and tenderly

speaks Wisdom to the Simple, Recovery to the Lost, and Life to the Dead.

As to his Example, “ (*b*) Behold the Man ! ” In human nature he displayed divine virtue, and in Man he lived the life of God. To look upon his character might inspire us, as men, with a triumphant pleasure ; and to tread in any of his steps, is to rise towards excellence and happiness. Can we then be so insensible in mind, as to look without the strongest attraction upon the majesty and purity of our nature, thus visibly displayed ? Can we be so faint in heart, as to refuse a struggle, in attaining some likeness of this Great Original, and coming, as near as may be, “ (*i*) unto a perfect man.” All our hope of future benefit from the effect of his Death, depends on the present impression we take from “ (*k*) the gracious words ” of his Ministry, and on the conformity we bear to the character of his Life.

(*b*) John, xix. 5.

(*i*) Ephes. iv. 13.

(*k*) Luke iv. 22.

THESE were some of the applications, for renewing and forwarding the Christian and moral fruitfulness of man, which the Great Intercessor made during his humiliation upon earth. And he applied still further means to the same end, by “(l) exceeding great and precious promises,” which he undertook to fulfil from his state of glory in heaven.

I. ONE of these was the Promise of vouchsafing a present ear, and sure effect, to Prayer.

THUS, in favour of those branches, that should seek to (m) abide in him, his divine attributes of Omniscience and Omnipresence, of Infinite Power, and Infinite Wisdom, would all be employed. And God in him would (n) glorify himself by the plenteousness of their fruit. To him, then, we are to refer; with him we are to maintain communication; that none of

(l) 11 Pet. i. 4.

(m) See John, xv. 4, &c.

(n) See John, xv. 8.

us may become as a branch that abideth not in him, but is left to itself, as a wilful out-cast, to decline, and wither, and die.

II. THE Promise of Grace, to be continually dispensed from heaven, was another of the means, which the Great Intercessor applied.

LIKE the Dresser of the Vineyard, he would not act in behalf of his object once only, and then no more ; but would visit it with repeated fondness, and cherish it with unremitted assiduity. If the productive principle of good were once put in strenuous operation, his gracious aids would conduct the hopeful progress from strength to strength. With Christian penitents he would ever be present by his power ; to ensure the uncertain strength of their virtuous effort, and to support their drooping spirit in every arduous struggle. “ (o) A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench :” but will

(o) Isaiah, xlii. 3.

impart firmness to moral imbecilities, and raise the dubious spark to a pure and aspiring flame. Thus at length, through the power of his Grace, the conflict of penitence will terminate in the triumph of virtue.

III. HE has further applied, as the greatest of all encouragements to the production of “ (*p*) fruit unto holiness,” the Promise of Eternal Reward.

THIS is the grand end, to which all his divine means and instruments work. And as mortal man cannot conceive a greater blessing, than to be glorified for ever in happiness, surely this incomparable Promise will awaken, and interest, and stimulate the rational nature. How can it fail to stir it up to serious consideration, and from consideration to ardent desire, and from desire to devoted effort, and from effort to final attainment?

THESE are some of the inestimable applications, which the Great Intercessor personally made, to infuse

into his object new and effective powers of bearing the fruit of Christian character. And to hold mankind, if possible, under the saving influence of them all, it hath pleased him to apply yet another instrument in perpetual operation under him.

IV. THAT instrument is what a Sacred Writer styles, "The Word of Exhortation."

THIS indeed is a "(q)" treasure in earthen vessels;" yet may it, in a happy hour of divine direction, reach and penetrate some feeling and reclaimable hearts.

IN the high and holy name of the Great Intercessor, It calls repeatedly and earnestly to the men and nations of the earth. By all that he, from love to mankind, has suffered and done; by the heavenly excellence of his doctrines, and the divine authority of his commands; by his example of the life of God in the nature of man; by his promise to hear and answer the prayer;

(q) 11 Corinth. iv. 7.

by

by his saving grace inexhaustibly dispensed from heaven; by the promised share of his own eternal glory; by every one and by all of these blessings; by their transcendence as to value, by their greatness as to number; by these will "The Word of Exhortation" rouse mankind. By these will it excite them, to revive from the death of sin, and from the deathlike state of unproductive being, to "(r) newness of life;" and to bear those fruits of individual and national character, which, as Christians, and as Men, they owe to their Saviour, their Country, and Themselves.

So will "The Word of Exhortation" plead. And it will enforce the plea by that formidable menace in the Parable, "if not, after that thou shalt cut it down." This will it urge, as the dread denunciation of The Great Intercessor himself: and it will appeal to many a solemn WARNING, many a sign and prelude of judicial doom, which present appearances under his Mediatorial Providence frequently and strongly convey.

(r) Rom. vi. 4.

FOR

FOR such solemn Warning there is really exhibited, not only in special and extraordinary cases, but also daily and hourly in the passing scene of common life. There, in characters so large that he who runs may read, are written, the late and lively health of Moderation, the early infirmity and death of Excess; the settled assurance of Innocence, the restless panick of Guilt; the success and honour of Integrity, the disappointment and shame of Baseness; the creditable independence of Industry, the despicable beggary of Idleness; the cheerful plenty of Frugality, the distressful indigence of Profusion. There too is traced out the melancholy career of many a mind, that opened in fair hopes, but sunk to dissipation, and thence to ruin. Harassed then by the importunity of desires which it could no longer gratify, and agonizing under the pressure of necessities, which it wanted power to remove and fortitude to bear, it turned an evil eye on the Successful and the Happy; and on Social Life, wherein its own reputable stand was lost; and on Social Order, which impeded the course it would take. Thus, proud, sullen, and inveterate, it settled in universal disaffection, the offspring of despair.

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BEHOLD,

BEHOLD, then, that the fruits of Christian character are, in all their kinds, indispensable requisites, and have in fact “(s) promise of the life that now is;” and must be produced, if not for the sake of God’s just claim, at least for decided value of their own.

To another Warning also “The Word of Exhortation” will appeal; a constant and awful Warning, yet alas! but little regarded. It is the Warning of Death. And this it says, Brethren, “(t) the time is short;” by waste it is made shorter still; and by secret judgment it may become short indeed. With respect to some, as with respect to the tree in the Parable, all may depend on one brief season more. But, even at the best, ere long must come our nature’s mortal hour, when the mansions of our fathers which we inhabit, their state and name which we hold, their fortunes which we enjoy, and all that we have in this our day, will be our own no more. Have we, then, it may well be asked, have we any enduring substance, any personal

(s) 1 Tim. iv. 8.

(t) See 1 Corinth. vii. 29.

and inseparable property, to prevent our standing bare and unprovided, when all other things shall be lost ? If we have Christian character, or will henceforth apply a steady effort to produce it, all will then be our own that ever deserved a wish. That indeed, like the Divine Author of all our blessings, “(u) hath immortality.” That will stand before him as our admissible witness ; and constitute our accepted offering at the throne of his judgment.

FROM such Ordinary Warnings, “ The Word of Exhortation ” will extend its appeal to Warnings of a more uncommon and momentous kind ; to every recorded instance of nations, either raised to importance and prosperity by national virtue, or sunk to insignificance and misery by the corruption of publick character.

ON One present Warning will it particularly dwell ; on One, of most Extraordinary and terrible cast.

(u) 1 Tim. vi. 16.

WE have seen the Spirit of the Atheist and the Libertine hold the Legislative Authority of a Christian nation near us. We have seen it gain on the simple by infatuating their simplicity; on the vehement by impelling their vehemence; on the malignant by exasperating their malignity; and thus, by adjusting the snare to the ruling passion of every man, ensure its own use of them all. We have seen it stifle the charities of humanity; cancel the restraints of virtue; discard the sanctions of the Gospel; and, either by treacherous agency or open war, push its principles against the Altar and the Throne of other Christian countries. We have seen it hold out to Ambition and Tyranny, to Malice and Rapine, their several expedients of legalized crime; and under the shock of factions, all rising and raging and falling in blood, aggravate on every change the Miseries of the Publick.

How awful a monument is this, to shew mankind how deplorable is the state, to which frantick passions can reduce the human heart, when its Christian character

rafter is gone: and to warn every nation, that the irreligion, and the profligacy, of the publick mind, are the most dreadful of all enemies to its glory, its happiness, and its hope: and that, unless it obtain and hold a conquest over vicious principle, there is no other victory that can save it.

“(x) AND I beseech you, Brethren, suffer The “ Word of Exhortation:” that the great themes on which it insists, the new means and motives vouchsafed in Redemption, and the warnings presented in Life, may reinvigorate and perpetuate in us the production of their due fruit, the inestimable character of a truly Christian People. To the service of our Country, Talents, Toil, and Bravery, are daily devoted by Many. To the same dear object, life reformed to Religion and Virtue may be devoted by All. The private effort of every man, if so directed, would bear an immediate and noble relation to the interest of the whole community: and though in contribution it were but a mite, yet in the aggregate it would rise to infinite

(x) Heb. xiii. 22.

value. So might come the blessing on our prepared defence against the foe; and the shield of divine protection be bound on the arm of the nation's might. So might soon be dissipated, as by a central light, the whole of the surrounding darkness in our publick scene. For were there but this soundness at the roots of the tree, would the “(y) blossom go up as dust?” No; not in trying seasons. The Lord would find upon it the signs of a coming produce; and in gracious acceptance of such hopeful appearances, would “let it alone” to bear.

THEREFORE, “(z) I beseech you, Brethren, suffer “The Word of Exhortation:” suffer it, for the sake of our God in Christ; suffer it, for our Country's sake; suffer it, for Your Own.

(y) See Isai. v. 24.

(z) Heb. xiii. 22.

T H E E N D.

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